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NOTES

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POINTS AFTER

It is not clear how much more of the Watergate story will come out, as Congress and the press seem to have called a moratorium on further information. But one thing is already clear: Nixon can't claim sole credit for the cover-up, for his resignation slowed rather than speeded up the investigation. The Republicans, of course, would like nothing better than to pretend that amnesia is in the "national interest," while the Democrats, and most of the press, seem to feel that it is in bad taste—or bad politics—to keep the question of Watergate alive.

The trouble is we still don't know *what* happened at Watergate, but, even more important, we don't know *why* it happened. For we don't know why Nixon either ordered or permitted all those foolhardy activities which he didn't need and couldn't contain; surely neither his election nor prestige were helped by Watergate. But if we don't know Nixon's aims or motives, then Watergate has no political meaning, and our speculations become mystifications. So far, most of the explanations of Watergate have been metaphors for our ignorance and our prejudices, ranging all the way from the notion of Nixon as bungler to that of a tragic figure, destroyed by greed and small-mindedness, that is, by his character. In between are all sorts of ruminations about Nixon's mind and psyche, as pretentious as they are simple-minded.

Perhaps we'll soon learn enough to end the guessing game, but up to now the explanations of the inexplicable can be boiled down to a few theories, which cancel each other out.

- The simplest view is that Nixon and his lieutenants were stupid and petty schemers. In other words, they acted out their retrograde morals and politics. But this explanation is little more than a tautology, for all it says is that they did the only thing they were able to do. Besides, it ignores Nixon's native cunning, the kind which all except the dumbest politicians are endowed with and which is at least sufficient for survival, if for nothing else. If you accept this view, you are committed to the idea that Nixon's politics were totally aimless which means they can't be explained.
- At the other pole is the theory that far from being stupid, Nixon and his inner circle were shrewdly and doggedly tightening their hold on governmental power, and were preparing to stage a coup, or to call off the next election. At the very least, so this scenario goes, they were out to gain control of government agencies like the CIA and the FBI, and to intimidate the press and broadcasting media, to increase the power of the White House and undermine the opposition. At the moment there is no direct evidence to prove or disprove this version of Watergate. But though some politically sophisticated people have held this view, I do not find it convincing, for a number of reasons. To begin with, in the present state of the country it is not that simple to seize the government without the army and some mass support, neither of which Nixon had. And one must assume that Nixon was at least as aware of this as we are. Had he had such support, it would not have been so easy to get him to resign, with his rhetoric strong, but actually meek, like someone playing according to the rules. If Nixon was really trying to entrench himself in the White House, then his failure to resist the process of impeachment by more than a few delaying tactics becomes totally inexplicable. Why did he not at the outset destroy all the tapes? And why did he finally hand over some incriminating ones, however

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slowly and reluctantly? It is not at all certain that without the evidence of the tapes Congress would have gone through with impeachment and conviction. Furthermore, if those who said we were on the verge of a dictatorship really believed it, why didn't they try to alert the country and mobilize the natural forces of resistance. (The recent rumor that Haig, Schlesinger and Kissinger were afraid Nixon might use the army if he were impeached, only emphasizes the fact that he did not seem to have this in mind.)

● Another view has to do with Nixon's psyche. Though it can hardly claim to be a theory, this "explanation" is popular among some analysts and other people who think it is sophisticated to account for political forces and movements by reducing them to the neuroses or psychoses of their leaders. Thus Stalin's regime could be explained by his paranoia and Hitler's by his schizophrenia, while Nixon had a touch of both. Training their telescopic sights on Nixon's eyes, his hands, his smile, his twitch, on anything that could be inflated into a "behavior pattern," these long-distance analysts were able to see just what kind of disorder lay behind the lust for power and the lies that masked it. Of course, what is still unexplained by such instant analyses, which can be applied to any ruthless figure, is what kind of madness led this "power-crazed monster" to give up without a fight when the leaders of the Republican Party decided that Nixon was a luxury it could no longer afford to carry—though there is always the drive toward self-destruction to fall back on.

● It seems to me less apocalyptic, hence more plausible, to take the view that Watergate was the culmination of Nixonian politics. In this light, it can be seen that Nixon was neither a political idiot nor a frustrated dictator, but that politics for him meant perpetually consolidating his position by bugging his friends as well as his enemies, intimidating the opposition, getting away with all he could, covering up what he couldn't, and generally trying to increase his personal power rather than to seize state power. There is no doubt that the corruption, the arrogance, the attempts to muzzle dissent went far beyond any other American administration, and those who deny this are, as we said in an earlier comment, part of the intellectual cover-up. Still, the difference was mostly of degree, not of kind, which is why so many conservative congressmen were able to identify with and to protect Nixon until the revelation of the tapes put them out on a political limb. In short, Nixon was out for the short-term and meager benefits of old-style American politics—pushed beyond the norms of political corruption but contained within the system. He was too much the practical politician to have any grandiose political dreams. He was no Hitler, no Stalin, not even a banana republic leader.

Those who take this position are further bolstered by the rumors that Watergate was not only the tip of an iceberg, but was one of many icebergs. Apparently there were other plumbers, other buggings, particularly of foreign embassies and radical groups, all kinds of other schemes to subvert the CIA, FBI, IRS, etc. If this is true it would explain Watergate by normalizing it, by suggesting, that is, that Nixon had no aims or motives that transcended his snooping and scheming and silencing the critics who might be in a position to expose him.

Someone like Chomsky also argues with some persuasiveness that spying on left organizations and leaders and planting provocateurs in them had been going on for years in earlier administrations, but that Nixon violated the unwritten code, as did McCarthy, by using these tactics on the establishment itself—not just on dissidents. But it does seem to me that there is an important difference, for it is not the raid on Democratic headquarters that made one uneasy about the future of the country but the almost total disregard of constitutional rights and the general moral chaos over which Nixon presided.

I also think that Chomsky underestimates the political force of the revulsion against Nixon that has swept the country. Perhaps he's right in seeing a

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certain hypocrisy and myopia on the part of liberals in their excessive reaction to the persecution of respectable people and institutions, like *The New York Times,* as compared with their indifference to the persecution of militants and radicals. Still, there was something very reassuring in the ultimate response of Congress, the media, and public opinion on the whole, to Nixonian politics, indicating that there was a limit to what the country would put up with. Only a few months earlier it was frightening to think there might be no limits, that the country was so corrupt, so brainwashed, so spineless, that what we were living through was nothing less than our moral and political decline. And in the absence of any other viable solutions, perhaps we have to be grateful for lesser evils—a doctrine we once despised when we were younger, purer, more uncompromising, and still believed that radical solutions were possible.

P.S. The just announced blanket pardon of Nixon, a pardon for undisclosed crimes, and the rumored pardon of all the other Watergate participants, is the final act of the coverup. Now, without any judicial means of getting at the still unknown facts, Watergate is declared officially a mystery, and thus transferred from the present to the past, which is the exclusive preserve of scholars and historians. Only the fact that this has happened keeps it from being incredible—incredible, too, that the new administration should revert so quickly to Nixonian methods.

An ironic thought: if Christ had been pardoned—for crimes he didn't commit—we wouldn't have Christianity.

W.P.

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Samuel Beckett

MERCIER AND CAMIER

I

The journey of Mercier and Camier is one I can tell, if I will, for I was with them all the time.

Physically it was fairly easy going, without seas or frontiers to be crossed, through regions untormented on the whole, if desolate in parts. Mercier and Camier did not remove from home, they had that great good fortune. They did not have to face, with greater or less success, outlandish ways, tongues, laws, skies, foods, in surroundings little resembling those to which first childhood, then boyhood, then manhood had inured them. The weather, though often inclement (but they knew no better), never exceeded the limits of the temperate, that is to say of what could still be borne, without danger if not without discomfort, by the average native fittingly clad and shod. With regard to money, if it did not run to first class transport or the palatial hotel, still there was enough to keep them going, to and fro, without recourse to alms. It may be said therefore that in this respect too they were fortunate, up to a point. They had to struggle, but less than many must, less perhaps than most of those who venture forth, driven by a need now clear and now obscure.

They had consulted together at length, before embarking on this journey, weighing with all the calm at their command what benefits they might hope from it, what ills apprehend, maintaining turn about the dark side and the rosy. The only certitude they gained from these debates was that of not lightly launching out, into the unknown.

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Camier was first to arrive at the appointed place. That is to say that on his arrival Mercier was not there. In reality Mercier had forestalled him by a good ten minutes. Not Camier then, but Mercier, was first to arrive. He possessed himself in patience for five minutes, with his eye on the various avenues of approach open to his friend, then set out for a saunter destined to last full fifteen minutes. Meantime Camier, five minutes having passed without sight or sign of Mercier, took himself off in his turn for a little stroll. On his return to the place, fifteen minutes later, it was in vain he cast about him, and understandably so. For Mercier, after cooling his heels for a further five minutes, had wandered off again for what he pleased to call a little stretch. Camier hung around for five more minutes, then again departed, saying to himself, Perhaps I'll run into him in the street. It was at this moment that Mercier, back from his breather, which as chance this time would have it had not exceeded ten minutes, glimpsed receding in the morning mist a shape suggestive of Camier's and which was indeed none other. Unhappily it vanished as though swallowed up by the cobbles, leaving Mercier to resume his vigil. But on expiry of what is beginning to look like the regulation five minutes he abandoned it again, feeling the need of a little motion. Their joy was thus for an instant unbounded, Mercier's joy and Camier's joy, when after five and ten minutes respectively of uneasy prowl, debouching simultaneously on the square, they found themselves face to face for the first time since the evening before. The time was nine fifty in the morning.

In other words:

	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.
Mercier	9.05	9.10	9.25	9.30	9.40	9.45	9.50
Camier	9.15	9.20	9.35	9.40	9.50		

What stink of artifice.

They were still in each other's arms when the rain began to fall, with quite oriental abruptness. They made therefore with all speed to the shelter which, in the form of a pagoda, had been erected here as protection from the rain and other inclemencies, in a word from the weather. Shadowy and abounding in nooks and crannies it was a friend to lovers also and to the aged of either sex. Into this refuge, at the same instant as our heroes, bounded a dog, followed shortly by a second. Mercier and Camier, irresolute, exchanged a look. They had not finished in each other's arms and yet felt awkward about resuming.

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The dogs for their part were already copulating, with the utmost naturalness.

The place where they now found themselves, where they had agreed, not without pains, that they should meet, was not properly speaking a square, but rather a small public garden at the heart of a tangle of streets and lanes. It displayed the usual shrubberies, flowerbeds, pools, fountains, statues, lawns and benches in strangulating profusion. It had something of the maze, irksome to perambulate, difficult of egress, for one not in its secrets. Entry was of course the simplest thing in the world. In the centre, roughly, towered huge a shining copper beech, planted several centuries earlier, according to the sign rudely nailed to the bole, by a Field Marshal of France peacefully named Saint-Ruth. Hardly had he done so, in the words of the inscription, when he was struck dead by a cannon-ball, faithful to the last to the same hopeless cause, on a battlefield having little in common, from the point of view of landscape, with those on which he had won his spurs, first as brigadier, then as lieutenant, if that is the order in which spurs are won, on the battlefield. It was no doubt to this tree that the garden owed its existence, a consequence which can scarcely have occurred to the Field Marshal as on that distant day, well clear of the quincunxes, before an elegant and replete assistance, he held the frail sapling upright in the hole gorged with evening dew. But to have done with this tree and hear no more about it, from it the garden derived what little charm it still possessed, not to mention of course its name. The stifled giant's days were numbered, it would not cease henceforward to pine and rot till finally removed, bit by bit. Then for a while, in the garden mysteriously named, people would breathe more freely.

Mercier and Camier did not know the place. Hence no doubt their choice of it for their meeting. Certain things shall never be known for sure.

Through the orange panes the rain to them seemed golden and brought back memories, determined by the hazard of their excursions, to the one of Rome, of Naples to the other, mutually unavowed and with a feeling akin to shame. They should have felt the better for this glow of distant days when they were young, and warm, and loved art, and mocked marriage, and did not know each other, but they felt no whit the better.

Let us go home, said Camier.

Why? said Mercier.

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It won't stop all day, said Camier.

Long or short, tis but a shower, said Mercier.

I can't stand there doing nothing, said Camier.

Then let us sit, said Mercier.

Worse still, said Camier.

Then let us walk up and down, said Mercier, yes, arm in arm let us pace to and fro. There is not much room, but there might be even less. Lay down our unbrella, there, help me off with our knapsack, so, thanks, and off we go.

Camier submitted.

Every now and then the sky lightened and the rain abated. Then they would halt before the door. This was the signal for the sky to darken again and the rain to redouble in fury.

Don't look, said Mercier.

The sound is enough, said Camier.

True, said Mercier.

After a moment of silence Mercier said:

The dogs don't trouble you?

Why does he not withdraw? said Camier

He cannot, said Mercier.

Why? said Camier.

One of nature's little gadgets, said Mercier, no doubt to make insemination double sure.

They begin astraddle, said Camier, and finish arsy-versy.

What would you? said Mercier. The ecstasy is past, they yearn to part, to go and piss against a post or eat a morsel of shit, but cannot. So they turn their backs on each other. You'd do as much, if you were they.

Delicacy would restrain me, said Camier.

And what would you do? said Mercier.

Feign regret, said Camier, that I could not renew such pleasure incontinent.

After a moment of silence Camier said:

Let us sit us down, I feel all sucked off.

You mean sit down, said Mercier.

I mean sit us down, said Camier.

Then let us sit us down, said Mercier.

On all hands already the workers were at it again, the air waxed loud with cries of pleasure and pain and with the urbaner notes of

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those for whom life had exhausted its surprises, as well on the minus side as on the plus. Things too were getting ponderously under way. It was in vain the rain poured down, the whole business was starting again with apparently no less ardour than if the sky had been a cloudless blue.

You kept me waiting, said Mercier.

On the contrary, said Camier.

I arrived at nine five, said Mercier.

And I at nine fifteen, said Camier.

You see, said Mercier.

Waiting, said Camier, and keeping waiting can only be with reference to a pre-arranged terminus.

And for what hour was our appointment, according to you? said Mercier.

Nine fifteen, said Camier.

Then you are grievously mistaken said Mercier.

Meaning? said Camier.

Will you never have done astounding me? said Mercier.

Explain yourself, said Camier.

I close my eyes and live it over again, said Mercier, your hand in mine, tears rising to my eyes and the sound of my faltering voice, So be it, tomorrow at nine. A drunken woman passed by, singing a ribald song and hitching up her skirts.

She went to your head, said Camier. He took a notebook from his pocket, turned the leaves and read: Monday 15, St. Macarius, 9.15, St. Ruth, collect umbrella at Helen's.

And what does that prove? said Mercier.

My good faith, said Camier.

True, said Mercier.

We shall never know, said Camier, at what hour we arranged to meet today, so let us drop the subject.

In all this confusion one thing alone is sure, said Mercier, and that is that we met at ten to ten, at the same time as the hands, or rather a moment later.

There is that to be thankful for, said Camier.

The rain had not yet begun, said Mercier.

The morning fervour was intact, said Camier.

Don't lose our agenda, said Mercier.

At this moment suddenly appeared from nowhere the first of a

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long line of maleficent beings. His uniform, sickly green in colour, its place of honour rife with heroic emblems and badges, suited him down to the ground. Inspired by the example of the great Sarsfield he had risked his life without success in defence of a territory which in itself must have left him cold and considered as a symbol cannot have greatly heated him either. He carried a stick at once elegant and massive and even leaned on it from time to time. He suffered torment with his hip, the pain shot down his buttock and up his rectum deep into the bowels and even as far north as the pyloric valve, culminating as a matter of course in uretro-scrotal spasms with quasi-incessant longing to micturate. Invalided out with a grudging pension, whence the sour looks of nearly all those, male and female, with whom his duties and remnants of bonhomie brought him daily in contact, he sometimes felt it would have been wiser on his part, during the great upheaval, to devote his energies to the domestic skirmish, the Gaelic dialect, the fortification of his faith and the treasures of a folklore beyond compare. The bodily danger would have been less and the benefits more certain. But this thought, when he had relished all its bitterness, he would banish from his mind, as unworthy of it. His moustache, once stiff as the lip it was grown to hide, was no longer so. From time to time, when he remembered, with a blast from below of fetid breath mingled with spittle, he straightened it momentarily. Motionless at the foot of the pagoda steps, his cape agape, streaming with rain, he darted his eyes to and from, from Mercier and Camier to the dogs, from the dogs to Mercier and Camier.

Who owns that bicycle? he said.

Mercier and Camier exchanged a look.

We could have done without this, said Camier.

Shift her, said the ranger.

It may prove diverting, said Mercier.

Who owns them dogs? said the ranger.

I don't see how we can stay, said Camier.

Can it I wonder be the fillip we needed, to get us moving? said Mercier.

The ranger mounted the steps of the shelter and stood stockstill in the doorway. The air darkened immediately and turned a deeper yellow.

I think he is about to attack us, said Camier.

I leave the balls to you, as usual, said Mercier.

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Dear sergeant, said Camier, what exactly can we do for you?

You see that bicycle? said the ranger.

I see nothing, said Camier. Mercier, do you see a bicycle?

Is she yours? said the ranger.

A thing we do not see, said Camier, for whose existence we have only your word, how are we to tell if it is ours, or another's?

Why would it be ours? said Mercier. Are these dogs ours? No. We see them today for the first time. And you would have it that the bicycle, assuming it exists, is ours? And yet the dogs are not ours.

Bugger the dogs, said the ranger.

But as if to give himself the lie he fell on them with stick and boot and drove them cursing from the pagoda. Tied together as they still were, by the post-coitus, their retreat was no easy matter. For the efforts they made to escape, acting equally in opposite directions, could not but annul each other. They must have greatly suffered.

He has now buggered the dogs, said Mercier.

He has driven them from the shelter, said Camier, there is no denying that, but by no means from the garden.

The rain will soon wash them loose, said Mercier. Less rut-besotted they would have thought of it themselves.

The fact is he has done them a service, said Camier.

Let us show him a little kindness, said Mercier, he's a hero of the great war. Here we were, high and dry, masturbating full pelt without fear of interruption, while he was crawling in the Flanders mud, shitting in his puttees.

Conclude nothing from those idle words, Mercier and Camier were old young.

It's an idea said Camier.

Will you look at that clatter of decorations, said Mercier. Do you realize the gallons of diarrhoea that represents?

Darkly, said Camier, as only one so costive can.

Let us suppose this alleged bicycle is ours, said Mercier. Where lies the harm?

A truce to dissembling, said Camier, it is ours.

Shift her out of here, said the ranger.

The day has dawned at last, said Camier, after years of shilly-shally, when we must go, we know not whither, perhaps never to return . . . alive. We are simply waiting for the day to lift, then full speed ahead. Try and understand.

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What is more, said Mercier, we have still thought to take, before it is too late.

Thought to take? said Camier.

Those were my words, said Mercier.

I thought all thought was taken, said Camier, and all in order.

All is not, said Mercier.

Will you shift her or won't you? said the ranger.

Are you venal, said Mercier, since you are deaf to reason?

Silence.

Can you be bought off? said Mercier.

Certainly, said the ranger.

Give him a bob, said Mercier. To think our first disbursement should be a sop to bribery and extortion.

The ranger vanished with a curse.

How of a piece they all are, said Mercier.

Now he'll prowl around, said Camier.

What can that matter to us? said Mercier.

I don't like being prowled around, said Camier.

Mercier took exception to this turn. Camier maintained it. This little game soon palled. It must have been near noon.

And now, said Mercier, the time is come for us.

For us? said Camier.

Precisely, said Mercier, for us, for serious matters.

What about a bite to eat? said Camier.

Thought first, said Mercier, then sustenance.

A long debate ensued, broken by long silences in which thought took place. At such times they would sink, now Mercier, now Camier, to such depths of meditation that the voice of one, resuming its drift, was powerless to bring the other back, or passed unheard. Or they would arrive simultaneously at often contrary conclusions and simultaneously begin to state them. Nor was it rare for one to lapse into a brood before the other had concluded his exposé. And there were times they would look long at each other, unable to utter a word, their minds two blanks. It was fresh from one such daze they decided to abandon their inquiry, for the time being. The afternoon was well advanced, the rain was falling still, the short winter day was drawing to a close.

It is you have the provisions, said Mercier.

On the contrary, said Camier.

True, said Mercier.

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My hunger is gone, said Camier.

One must eat, said Mercier.

I see no point, said Camier.

We have a long hard road before us still, said Mercier.

The sooner we drop the better, said Camier.

True, said Mercier.

The ranger's head appeared in the doorway. Believe it or not, only his head was to be seen. It was to say, in his quaint way, they were free to spend the night for half-a-crown.

Is thought now taken, said Camier, and all in order?

No, said Mercier.

Will all ever be? said Camier.

I believe so, said Mercier, yes, I believe, not firmly, no, but I believe, yes, the day is coming when all will be in order, at last.

That will be delightful, said Camier.

Let us hope so, said Mercier.

A long look passed between them. Camier said to himself, Even him I cannot see. A like thought agitated his vis-à-vis.

Two points seemed nevertheless established as a result of this consultation.

1. Mercier would set off alone, awheel, with the raincoat. Wherever he should stop for the night, at the first stage, he would get all in readiness to receive Camier. Camier would take the road as soon as the weather permitted. Camier would keep the umbrella. No mention of the sack.

2. It so chanced that Mercier, up to now, had shown himself the live wire, Camier the dead weight. The reverse was to be expected at any moment. On the less weak let the weaker always lean, for the course to follow. They might conceivably be valiant together. That would be the day. Or the great weakness might overtake them simultaneously. Let them in this case not give way to despair, but wait with confidence for the evil moment to pass. In spite of the vagueness of these expressions they understood each other, more or less.

Not knowing what to think, said Camier, I look away.

It would seem to be lifting, said Mercier.

The sun comes out at last, said Camier, that we may admire it sink, below the horizon.

That long moment of brightness, said Mercier, with its thousand colours, always stirs my heart.

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The day of toil is ended, said Camier, a kind of ink rises in the east and floods the sky.

The bell rang, announcing closing time.

I sense vague shadowy shapes, said Camier, they come and go with muffled cries.

I too have the feeling, said Mercier, we have not gone unobserved since morning.

Are we by any chance alone now? said Camier.

I see no one, said Mercier.

Let us then go together, said Camier.

They left the shelter.

The sack, said Mercier.

The umbrella, said Camier.

The raincoat, said Mercier.

It I have, said Camier.

Is there nothing else? said Mercier.

I see nothing else, said Camier.

I'll get them, said Mercier, you mind the bicycle.

It was a woman's bicycle, without free wheel unfortunately. To brake one pedalled backward.

The ranger, his bunch of keys in his hand, watched them recede. Mercier held the handlebar, Camier the saddle. The pedals rose and fell.

He cursed them on their way.

II

In the show windows the lights came on, went out, according to the show. Through the slippery streets the crowd pressed on as towards some unquestioned goal. A strange well-being, wroth and weary, filled the air. Close the eyes and not a voice is heard, only the onward panting of the feet. In this throng silence they advanced as best they could, at the edge of the sidewalk, Mercier in front, his hand on the handlebar, Camier behind, his hand on the saddle, and the bicycle slithered in the gutter by their side.

You hinder me more than you help me, said Mercier.

I'm not trying to help you, said Camier, I'm trying to help myself.

Then all is well, said Mercier.

I'm cold, said Camier.

It was indeed cold.

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It is indeed cold, said Mercier.

Where do our feet think they're taking us? said Camier.

They would seem to be heading for the canal, said Mercier.

Already? said Camier.

Perhaps we shall be tempted, said Mercier, to strike out along the towpath and follow it till boredom doth ensue. Before us, beckoning us on, without our having to lift our eyes, the dying tints we love so well.

Speak for yourself, said Camier.

The very water, said Mercier, will linger livid, which is not to be despised either. And then the whim, who knows, may take us to throw ourselves in.

The little bridges slip by, said Camier, ever fewer and farther between. We pore over the locks, trying to understand. From the barges made fast to the bank waft the watermen's voices, bidding us goodnight. Their day is done, they smoke a last pipe before turning in.

Every man for himself, said Mercier, and God for one and all.

The town lies far behind, said Camier. Little by little night overtakes us, blueblack. We splash through puddles left by the rain. It is no longer possible to advance. Retreat is equally out of the question.

He added, some moments later:

What are you musing on, Mercier?

On the horror of existence, confusedly, said Mercier.

What about a drink? said Camier.

I thought we had agreed to abstain, said Mercier, except in the event of accident, or indisposition. Does not that figure among our many conventions?

I don't call drink, said Camier, a quick nip to put some life in us.

They stopped at the first pub.

No bikes here, said the publican.

Perhaps after all he was a mere hireling.

And now? said Camier.

We might chain it to a lamppost, said Mercier.

That would give us more freedom, said Camier. He added, Of movement.

In the end they fell back on a railing. It came to the same.

And now? said Mercier.

Back to no bikes? said Camier.

Never! said Mercier.

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Never say that, said Camier.

So they adjourned across the way.

Sitting at the bar they discoursed of this and that, brokenly, as was their custom. They spoke, fell silent, listened to each other, stopped listening, each as he fancied or as bidden from within. There were moments, minutes on end, when Camier lacked the strength to raise his glass to his mouth. Mercier was subject to the same failing. Then the less weak of the two gave the weaker to drink, inserting between his lips the rim of his glass. A press of sombre shaggy bulks hemmed them about, thicker and thicker as the hour wore on. From their conversation there emerged in spite of all, among other points, the following.

1. It would be useless, nay, madness, to venture any further for the moment.
2. They need only ask Helen to put them up for the night.
3. Nothing would prevent them from setting out on the morrow, hail, rain or shine, at the crack of dawn.
4. They had nothing to reproach themselves with.
5. Did what they were looking for exist?
6. What were they looking for?
7. There was no hurry.
8. All their judgements relating to the expedition called for revision, in tranquillity.
9. Only one thing mattered: depart.
10. To hell with it all anyway.

Back in the street they linked arms. After a few hundred yards Mercier drew Camier's attention to the fact that they were not in step.

You have your gait, said Camier, I have mine.

I'm not accusing anyone, said Mercier, but it's wearing. We advance in jerks.

I'd prefer you to ask me straight out, said Camier, straight out plump and plain, either to let go your arm and move away or else to fall in with your titubations.

Camier, Camier, said Mercier, squeezing his arm.

They came to a crossroads and stopped.

Which way do we drag ourselves now? said Camier.

Our situation is no ordinary one, said Mercier, I mean in relation to Helen's home, if I know where we are. For these different ways all lead there with equal success.

Then let us turn back, said Camier.

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And lose ground we can ill afford? said Mercier.

We can't stay stuck here all night, said Camier, like a couple of clots.

Let us toss our umbrella, said Mercier. It will fall in a certain way, according to laws of which we know nothing. Then all we have to do is press forward in the designated direction.

The umbrella answered, Left! It resembled a great wounded bird, a great bird of ill omen shot down by hunters and awaiting quivering the coup de grâce. The likeness was striking. Camier picked it up and hung it from his pocket.

It is not broken, I trust, said Mercier.

Here their attention was drawn to a strange figure, that of a gentleman wearing, despite the rawness of the air, a simple frock-coat and top-hat. He seemed, for the moment, to be going their way, for their view was of his rear. His hands, in a gesture coquettishly demential, held high and wide apart the skirts of his cutaway. He advanced warily, with stiff and open tread.

Do you feel like singing? said Camier.

Not to my knowledge, said Mercier.

The rain was beginning again. But had it ever ceased?

Let us make haste, said Camier.

Why do you ask me that? said Mercier.

Camier seemed in no hurry to reply. Finally he said:

I hear singing.

They halted, the better to listen.

I hear nothing, said Mercier.

And yet you have good ears, said Camier, so far as I know.

Very fair, said Mercier.

Strange, said Camier.

Do you hear it still? said Mercier.

For all the world a mixed choir, said Camier.

Perhaps it's a delusion, said Mercier.

Possibly, said Camier.

Let's run, said Mercier.

They ran some little way in the dark and wet, without meeting a soul. When they had done running Mercier deplored the nice state, soaked to the buff, in which they would arrive at Helen's, to which in reply Camier described how they would immediately strip and put their things to dry, before the fire or in the hot-cupboard with the boiler and hot water pipes.

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Come to think of it, said Mercier, why didn't we use our umbrella?

Camier looked at the umbrella, now in his hand. He had placed it there so that he might run more freely.

We might have indeed, he said.

Why burden oneself with an umbrella, said Mercier, and not put it up as required?

Quite, said Camier.

Put it up now, in the name of God, said Mercier.

But Camier could not put it up.

Give it here, said Mercier.

But Mercier could not put it up either.

This was the moment chosen by the rain, acting on behalf of the universal malignity, to come down in buckets.

It's stuck, said Camier, don't strain it whatever you do.

Mercier used a nasty expression.

Meaning me? said Camier.

With both hands Mercier raised the umbrella high above his head and dashed it to the ground. He used another nasty expression. And to crown all, lifting to the sky his convulsed and streaming face, he said, As for thee, fuck thee.

Decidedly Mercier's grief, heroically contained since morning, could be no longer so.

Is it our little omniomni you are trying to abuse? said Camier. You should know better. It's he on the contrary fucks thee. Omniomni, the all-unfuckable.

Kindly leave Mrs. Mercier outside this discussion, said Mercier.

The mind has snapped, said Camier.

The first thing one noticed at Helen's was the carpet.

Will you look at that pile, said Camier.

Prime moquette, said Mercier.

Unbelievable, said Camier.

You'd think you never saw it till now, said Mercier, and you wallowing on it all these years.

I never did see it till now, said Camier, and now I can't forget it.

So one says, said Mercier.

If that evening the carpet in particular caught the eye, it was not alone in catching it, for a cockatoo caught it too. It clung shakily to its perch hung from a corner of the ceiling and dizzily rocked by conflicting swing and spin. It was wide awake, in spite of the late hour. Feebly and fitfully its breast rose and fell, faint quiverings ruffled up the down

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at every expiration. Every now and then the beak would gape and for what seemed whole seconds fishlike remain agape. Then the black spindle of the tongue was seen to stir. The eyes, averted from the light, filled with unspeakable bewilderment and distress, seemed all ears. Shivers of anguish rippled the plumage, blazing in ironic splendour. Beneath it, on the carpet, a great news-sheet was spread.

There's my bed and there's the couch, said Helen.

They're all yours, said Mercier. For my part I'll sleep with none.

A nice little suck-off, said Camier, not too prolonged, by all means, but nothing more.

Terminated, said Helen, the nice little suck-offs but nothing more.

I'll lie on the floor, said Mercier, and wait for dawn. Scenes and faces will unfold before my gaze, the rain on the skylight sound like claws and night rehearse its colours. The longing will take me to throw myself out of the window, but I'll master it. He repeated, in a roar, I'll master it!

Back in the street they wondered what they had done with the bicycle. The sack too had disappeared.

Did you see the polly? said Mercier.

Pretty thing, said Camier.

It groaned in the night, said Mercier.

Camier questioned this.

It will haunt me till my dying day, said Mercier.

I didn't know she had one, said Camier, what haunts me is the Kidderminster.

Nor I, said Mercier. She says she's had it for years.

She's lying of course, said Camier.

It was still raining. They took shelter in an archway, not knowing where to go.

When exactly did you notice the sack was gone? said Mercier.

This morning, said Camier, when I went to get my sulfamides.

I see no sign of the umbrella, said Mercier.

Camier inspected himself, stooping and spreading out his arms as if concerned with a button.

We must have left it at Helen's, he said.

My feeling is, said Mercier, that if we don't leave this town today we never shall. So let us think twice before we start trying to—.

He almost said recoup.

What exactly was there in the sack? said Camier.

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Toilet requisites and necessaries, said Mercier.

Superfluous luxury, said Camier.

A few pairs of socks, said Mercier, and one of drawers.

God, said Camier.

Some eatables, said Mercier.

Rotten ripe for the muckheap, said Camier.

On condition we retrieve them, said Mercier.

Let us board the first express southward bound! cried Camier. He added, more soberly, And so not be tempted to get out at the nearest stop.

And why south, said Mercier, rather than north, or east, or west?

I prefer south, said Camier.

Is that sufficient ground? said Mercier.

It's the nearest terminus, said Camier.

True, said Mercier.

He went out into the street and looked up at the sky, a grey pall, look where he would.

The sky is uniformly leaden, he said, resuming his place under the arch, we'll drown like rats without the umbrella.

Camier criticized this simile.

Like rats, said Mercier.

Even if we had the umbrella, said Camier, we could not use it, for it is broken.

What fresh extravagance is this? said Mercier.

We broke it yesterday, said Camier. Your idea.

Mercier took his head between his hands. Little by little the scene came back to him. Proudly he drew himself up, to his full height.

Come, he said, regrets are vain.

We'll wear the raincoat turn and turn about, said Camier.

We'll be in the train, said Mercier, speeding south.

Through the streaming panes, said Camier, we try to number the cows, shivering pitiably in the scant shelter of the hedges. Rooks take wing, all dripping and bedraggled. But gradually the day lifts and we arrive in the brilliant sunlight of a glorious winter's afternoon. It seems like Monaco.

I don't seem to have eaten for forty-eight hours, said Mercier. And yet I am not hungry.

One must eat, said Camier. He went on to compare the stomach with the bladder.

Apropos, said Mercier, how is your cyst?

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Dormant, said Camier, but under the surface mischief is brewing.

What will you do then? said Mercier.

I dread to think, said Camier.

I would just manage a cream puff, said Mercier.

Wait here, said Camier.

No no! cried Mercier. Don't leave me! Don't let us leave each other!

Camier left the archway and began to cross the street. Mercier called him back and an altercation ensued, too foolish to be recorded, so foolish was it.

Another would take umbrage, said Camier. Not I, all things considered. For I say to myself, The hour is grave and Mercier . . . well . . . he advanced towards Mercier who promptly recoiled. I was only going to embrace you, said Camier. I'll do it some other time, when you're less yourself, if I think of it.

He went out into the rain and disappeared. Alone in the archway Mercier began pacing to and fro, deep in bitter thought. It was their first separation since the morning of the day before. Raising suddenly his eyes, as from a vision no longer to be borne, he saw two children, a little boy and a little girl, standing gazing at him. They wore little black oilskins with hoods, identical, and the boy had a little satchel on his back. They held each other by the hand.

Papa! they said, with one voice or nearly.

Good-evening, my children, said Mercier, get along with you now.

But they did not get along with them, no, but stood their ground, their little clasped hands lightly swinging back and forth. Finally the little girl drew hers away and advanced towards him they had addressed as papa. She stretched out her little arms towards him, as if to invite a kiss, or at least a caress. The little boy followed suit, with visible misgiving. Mercier raised his foot and dashed it against the pavement. Be off with you! he cried. He bore down on them, wildly gesturing and his face contorted. The children backed away to the sidewalk and there stood still again. Fuck off out of here! screamed Mercier. He flew at them in a fury and they took to their heels. But soon they halted and looked back. What they saw then must have impressed them strongly, for they ran on and bolted down the first sidestreet. As for the unfortunate Mercier, satisfied after a few minutes of fuming tenterhooks that the danger was past, he returned dripping to

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the archway and resumed his reflections, if not at the point where they had been interrupted, at least at one near by.

Mercier's reflections were peculiar in this, that the same swell and surge swept through them all and cast the mind away, no matter where it embarked, on the same rocks invariably. They were perhaps not so much reflections as a dark torrent of brooding where past and future merged in a single flood and closed, over a present for ever absent. Ah well.

Here, said Camier, I hope you haven't been fretting.

Mercier extracted the cake from its paper wrapping and placed it on the palm of his hand. He bent forward and down till his nose was almost touching it and the eyes not far behind. He darted towards Camier, while still in this position, a sidelong look full of mistrust.

A cream horn, said Camier, the best I could find.

Mercier, still bent double, moved forward to the verge of the archway, where the light was better, and examined the cake again.

It's full of cream, said Camier.

Mercier slowly clenched his fist and the cake gushed between his fingers. The staring eyes filled with tears. Camier advanced to get a better view. The tears flowed, overflowed, all down the furrowed cheeks and vanished in the beard. The face remained unmoved. The eyes, still streaming and no doubt blinded, seemed intent on some object stirring on the ground.

If you didn't want it, said Camier, you had better given it to a dog, or to a child.

I'm in tears, said Mercier, don't intrude.

When the flow stopped Camier said:

Let me offer you our handkerchief.

There are days, said Mercier, one is born every minute. Then the world is full of shitty little Merciers. It's hell. Oh but to cease!

Enough, said Camier. You look like a capital S. Ninety if a day.

Would I were, said Mercier. He wiped his hand on the seat of his trousers. He said, I'll start crawling any minute.

I'm off, said Camier.

Leaving me to my fate, said Mercier. I knew it.

You know my little ways, said Camier.

No, said Mercier, but I was counting on your affection to help me serve my time.

I can help you, said Camier, I can't resurrect you.

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Take me by the hand, said Mercier, and lead me far away from here. I'll trot along at your side like a little puppy dog, or a tiny tot. And the day will come—.

A terrible screech of brakes rent the air, followed by a scream and a resounding crash. Mercier and Camier made a rush (after a moment's hesitation) for the open street and were rewarded by the vision, soon hidden by a concourse of gapers, of a big fat woman writhing feebly on the ground. The disorder of her dress revealed an amazing mass of billowing underclothes, originally white in colour. Her lifeblood, streaming from one or more wounds, had already reached the gutter.

Ah, said Mercier, that's what I needed, I feel a new man.

He was in fact transfigured.

Let this be a lesson to us, said Camier.

Meaning? said Mercier.

Never to despair, said Camier, or lose our faith in life.

Ah, said Mercier with relief, I was afraid you meant something else.

As they went their way an ambulance passed, speeding towards the scene of the mishap.

I beg your pardon? said Camier.

A crying shame, said Mercier.

I don't follow you, said Camier.

A six cylinder, said Mercier.

And what of it? said Camier.

And they talk about the petrol shortage, said Mercier.

There are perhaps more victims than one, said Camier.

It might be an infant child, said Mercier, for all they care.

The rain was falling gently, as from the fine rose of a watering pot. Mercier advanced with upturned face. Now and then he wiped it, with his free hand. He had not had a wash for some time.

Summary of two preceding chapters
I

Outset.
Meeting of Mercier and Camier
Saint-Ruth Square.
The beech.
The rain.
The shelter.
The dogs.

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Distress of Camier.
The ranger.
The bicycle.
Words with the ranger.
Mercier and Camier confer.
Results of this conference.
Bright too late.
The bell.
Mercier and Camier set out.

II

The town at twilight
Mercier and Camier on the way to the canal.
Vision of the canal.
The bicycle.
First bar.
Mercier and Camier confer.
Results of this conference.
Mercier and Camier on the way to Helen's.
Doubts as to the way.
The umbrella.
The man in the frockcoat.
The rain.
Camier hears singing.
Mercier and Camier run.
The umbrella.
The downpour.
Distress of Mercier.
At Helen's.
The cockatoo.
The Kidderminster.
The second day.
The rain.
Disappearance of sack, bicycle and umbrella.
The archway.
Mercier and Camier confer.
Results of this conference.
Departure of Camier.
Distress of Mercier.
Mercier and the children.
Return of Camier.
The cream horn.
Distress of Mercier.
The fat woman.
Mercier and Camier depart.
Rain on Mercier's face.

(Written 1946, translation completed 1974)

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Steven Marcus

DASHIELL HAMMETT AND THE CONTINENTAL OP

I

Dashiell Hammett—creator of such figures in the mythology of American culture as the Continental Op, Sam Spade, and the Thin Man—was born Samuel Dashiell Hammett, in St Mary's County, Maryland, in May 1894. The family was of Scottish and French extraction, and they were Catholic. Hammett's early years were spent in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and his formal education was brought to an end at the age of fourteen, when he left high school after less than a year of attendance. His father's relative lack of success in the world seems, at least in part, to be reflected in this decision.

For the next several years Hammett worked with indifferent success and even less interest at a number of odd jobs—on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, in factories, at stockbrokers, and as a casual laborer. When he was about twenty, he answered an advertisement in a Baltimore newspaper, and as a result found himself employed by Pinkerton's, the most famous of American private detective agencies. The young man had found a vocation that engaged his liveliest interests. The work was challenging, exciting, adventurous, dangerous, and humorous. It took him around the country and into and out of a large variety of walks of life, classes of society, and social and dramatic situations. These experiences were formative; their influence in his education as a writer can hardly be overestimated.

In 1918 he enlisted in the Ambulance Corps of the United States Army and was stationed near Baltimore. During his year of military

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service he came down with influenza which led to the activation in him of tuberculosis. It was his first encounter with the series of lung diseases from which he was eventually to die. In 1919, he returned to his work at Pinkerton and his travels and adventures in the service of the agency. The active and arduous work of a private detective agent in the field brought on another attack of tuberculosis, and he was hospitalized in 1920 and 1921 in government hospitals on the West Coast. While he was in the hospital he became involved with one of the nurses who worked there, and they were married toward the end of 1920.

Hammett was discharged from the hospital in May 1921, and he and his wife made their way along the West Coast to San Francisco. The town awakened Hammett's interest, and he went back to work there for the local branch of the Pinkerton Agency. He was to live in San Francisco for the next eight years, and the city provided him with the locale and material for a large part of his writing. Yet even as he was returning to work as a detective, other interests began to make themselves felt in him. He had conceived of the idea of becoming a writer, and was beginning to write bits of verse, small sketches from his experiences as a detective, and other pieces of apprentice work. Finally, the successful solution of a case led to his leaving the agency. Some $200,000 in gold was missing on an Australian ship that had put into San Francisco. The Pinkerton Agency was employed by the insurance company involved to find the gold—which they believed was stashed away on the ship. Hammett and another operative were sent to search the ship and found nothing. It was decided to send Hammett back to Australia on the ship in the belief that he might still find the missing loot. Hammett looked forward to the adventure. Just before the ship was to leave San Francisco, he made one last routine search and found the gold—it was hidden in a smokestack. He had solved the case and lost the trip to Australia. Frustrated and outdone by his own success, he handed in his resignation.

Soon after this, while working at odd jobs, Hammett began to hemorrhage again. Feeling that he had little time left to live, and that the one thing he wanted to do before he died was to write, he moved away from his family, took a cheap single room, and started to write. Some time around here he also began to work for a local jewelry store as a writer of advertising copy. It was an odd and uncertain Bohemian existence; sometimes he lived on soup; frequently he drank too much.

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By the end of 1922, however, he began to break into print, with a number of small pieces in *Smart Set* and *Black Mask*. This latter, a popular pulp fiction magazine, soon became Hammett's regular place of appearance in print, and his career and the career of the magazine traversed almost identical arcs. In October 1923, the first story in which the Continental Op appears—in his never-to-be-varied figure as anonymous narrator—was published. From then until 1930, as Hammett's writing underwent rapid and continuous development, this was the essential (though not the exclusive) form into which his fiction was cast. It was certainly the most successful, both in itself and in its appeal to a rapidly growing audience of readers. By the middle years of the 1920s, Hammett was becoming known as an original talent, an innovator in a popular form of fiction, and as the central figure in a new school of writing about crime—the "hard-boiled school," as it came quickly to be called. And it was also beginning to be recognized as being within its own context the structural equivalent of what Hemingway and the writers who clustered naturally about Hemingway were doing in their kind of writing during the same period.

By 1927, Hammett was ready to work on a larger scale. He began to publish serially, in *Black Mask,* large units of fiction that were in fact quasi-independent sections of novels. After they had been published in the magazine, he would revise them, and they would appear as volumes. *Red Harvest* was published as a volume in 1929, as was *The Dain Curse.* These two novels bring the Op's career to a climax (although three more short stories featuring the Op were later to appear), and Hammett was rapidly becoming both well known and affluent. In 1929, he invented Sam Spade and *The Maltese Falcon* and became immediately famous. This was followed at once in 1930 by *The Glass Key. The Thin Man,* Hammett's last published novel, and another large success, came out in 1934.

Some time during the late 1920s Hammett's marriage—two daughters were born of it—broke up for good. His life as a writer, as he continued to prosper, remained as intense, demanding, anarchic, and casually self-destructive as it had been in the years of his apprenticeship. On the one hand, there was a great deal of heavy drinking, there was a great deal of womanizing, and an even greater deal of compulsive and wild squandering of money. On the other hand, there were rigorous bouts of self-discipline and periods of extremely intense, ascetic, and self-denying hard work. After 1930 these latter began to di-

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minish in frequency. Hammett had left San Francisco in 1929 and moved to New York; from there in 1930, with the Great Depression setting deeply in, Hammett moved out to Hollywood. Warner Brothers had bought the film rights for *The Maltese Falcon,* and Hammett was offered high-paying work on a variety of film projects. It was here, one night in November, as he was coming out of a monumental drunk that had lasted for days, that he met a young woman named Lillian Hellman. The two were immediately attracted to one another, and there then began what was for both of them the most important relation in their lives. It was impassioned and tempestuous; it was often cruel and harsh and harmful, and there were times when neither was faithful to the other and when they went their own ways and lived apart. But in the end it endured; it lasted for thirty years, until his death.

By 1934 Hammett's career as a creative writer was finished. He did not know this, of course, and in 1932 in an interview said that he was planning to write a play. That play never got written, but another one did. It was called *The Children's Hour,* and Hammett's work as a careful reader, stern schoolmaster, and relentlessly honest critic was instrumental in its realization. His connection with Lillian Hellman's career as a playwright was to remain close, intimate, and instrumental as the years went on.

During the 1930s Hammett continued to work at various kinds of writing and rewriting jobs in the movie industry. He also became involved, as did so many other writers and intellectuals of the period, in various left-wing and anti-Fascist causes. He had become a Marxist; he had also committed himself to the cause of the Communist Party in America, and became a member of it probably sometime during 1937. Although he never surrendered his personal critical sense about the limitations and absurdities of many of his political associates and allies, both here and abroad, the commitment he had made was deep, and it was lasting, and he would pay for it in the end. It was characteristic of him—as both man and writer—that he was willing to pay the price.

Shortly after America entered World War II, Hammett—at the age of forty-eight—enlisted in the Army. Through some inexplicable sleight of hand and mouth he managed to persuade the Army doctors that the scars on his lungs that showed up on the X-rays were of no importance. He volunteered for overseas service and was sent to the Aleutians—where, among other things, he edited a daily newspaper

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for the troops. He apparently thoroughly enjoyed his tour of duty in the Army, and became a legendary character among his much younger fellow soldiers. When he was discharged from the Army in 1945 he was fifty-one, famous, and comparatively affluent. He had also developed emphysema. The adaptation of his novels and characters to movies and radio shows continued to bring in money, as did the steady sale of his novels. Times were changing, but his political loyalties were not. Neither were his drinking habits, which damaged and ravaged him until they brought him down in 1948 with the dt's. From that time forward he never drank.

The Cold War was now on, the period identified with Senator Joseph McCarthy's name was taking shape, and many old scores were beginning to be paid off. In one of the numerous legal cases that characterized the period, Hammett was called to give evidence. He was asked to name the contributors to a fund (of which he was a trustee) that supplied bail for Communists and others who were brought to trial (in this particular case, a number of persons on trial had jumped bail and vanished). Hammett refused to testify, was found guilty of contempt of court, and was sentenced to six months in jail. He spent five months in various prisons and was then released. When he got out of prison he was an exhausted and very ill man.

His external troubles were by no means over. The money, which had once been so plentiful, was no longer there. He was blacklisted in Hollywood, and his radio shows had gone off the air. The government sued him for back taxes, won a judgment of $140,000 against him, and had his royalty, and all other, payments blocked. He took it all, as he had taken all that had come before, stoically and without complaint. He retired further into himself and lived a quiet and self-contained life until 1956, when his illness and weakness made it impossible to live alone. Thereafter he lived within the care and companionship of Lillian Hellman. In 1960 his lung condition worsened and became cancerous. He died on January 10, 1961. By his own wish, he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. He had served the nation in two world wars. He had also served it in other ways, which were his own.

II

I was first introduced to Dashiell Hammett by Humphrey Bogart. I was twelve years old at the time, and mention the occasion because I

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take it to be exemplary, that I share this experience with countless others. (Earlier than this, at the very dawn of consciousness, I can recall William Powell and Myrna Loy and a small dog on a leash and an audience full of adults laughing; but that had nothing to do with Hammett or anything else as far as I was concerned.) What was striking about the event was that it was one of the first encounters I can consciously recall with the experience of moral ambiguity. Here was this detective you were supposed to like—and did like—behaving and speaking in peculiar and unexpected ways. He acted up to the cops, partly for real, partly as a ruse. He connived with crooks, for his own ends and perhaps even for some of theirs. He slept with his partner's wife, fell in love with a lady crook, and then refused to save her from the police, even though he could have. Which side was he on? Was he on any side apart from his own? And which or what side was that? The experience was not only morally ambiguous; it was morally complex and enigmatic as well. The impression it made was a lasting one.

Years later, after having read *The Maltese Falcon* and seen the movie again and then reread the novel, I could begin to understand why the impact of the film had been so memorable, much more so than that of most other movies. The director, John Huston, had had the wit to recognize the power, sharpness, integrity, and bite of Hammett's prose—particularly the dialogue—and the film script consists almost entirely of speech taken directly and without modification from the written novel. Moreover, this unusual situation is complicated still further. In selecting with notable intelligence the relevant scenes and passages from the novel, Huston had to make certain omissions. Paradoxically, however, one of the things that he chose to omit was the most important or central moment in the entire novel. It is also one of the central moments in all of Hammett's writing. I think we can make use of this oddly "lost" passage as a means of entry into Hammett's vision or imagination of the world.

It occurs as Spade is becoming involved with Brigid O'Shaughnessy in her struggle with the other thieves, and it is his way of communicating to her his sense of how the world and life go. His way is to tell her a story from his own experience. The form this story takes is that of a parable. It is a parable about a man named Flitcraft. Flitcraft was a successful, happily married, stable, and utterly respectable real estate dealer in Tacoma. One day he went out to lunch and never returned. No reason could be found for his disappearance, and no ac-

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count of it could be made. " 'He went like that,' Spade said, 'like a fist when you open your hand.' "

Five years later, Mrs. Flitcraft came to the agency at which Spade was working and told them that " 'she had seen a man in Spokane who looked a lot like her husband.' " Spade went off to investigate and found that it was indeed Flitcraft. He had been living in Spokane for a couple of years under the name of Charles Pierce. He had a successful automobile business, a wife, a baby son, a suburban home, and usually played golf after four in the afternoon, just as he had in Tacoma. Spade and he sat down to talk the matter over. Flitcraft, Spade recounts, "had no feeling of guilt. He had left his family well provided for, and what he had done seemed to him perfectly reasonable. The only thing that bothered him was a doubt that he could make that reasonableness clear" to his interlocutor. When Flitcraft went out to lunch that day five years before in Tacoma, " 'he passed an office-building that was being put up. . . . A beam or something fell eight or ten stories down and smacked the sidewalk alongside him.' " A chip of smashed sidewalk flew up and took a piece of skin off his cheek. He was otherwise unharmed. He stood there " 'scared stiff,' " he told Spade, " 'but he was more shocked than really frightened. He felt like somebody had taken the lid off life and let him look at the works.' "

Until that very moment Flitcraft had been " 'a good citizen and a good husband and father, not by any outer compulsion, but simply because he was a man who was most comfortable in step with his surroundings. . . . The life he knew was a clean orderly sane responsible affair. Now a falling beam had shown him that life was fundamentally none of these things. . . . What disturbed him was the discovery that in sensibly ordering his affairs he had got out of step, and not into step, with life.' " By the time he had finished lunch, he had reached the decision " 'that he would change his life at random by simply going away.' " He went off that afternoon, wandered around for a couple of years, then drifted back to the Northwest, " 'settled in Spokane and got married. His second wife didn't look like the first, but they were more alike than they were different.' " And the same held true of his second life. Spade then moves on to his conclusion: " 'He wasn't sorry for what he had done. It seemed reasonable enough to him. I don't think he even knew he had settled back into the same groove that he had jumped out of in Tacoma. But that's the part of it I always liked. He adjusted himself to beams falling, and then no more of them fell, and

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he adjusted himself to their not falling.' " End of parable. Brigid of course understands nothing of this, as Spade doubtless knew beforehand. Yet what he has been telling her has to do with the forces and beliefs and contingencies that guide his conduct and supply a structure to his apparently enigmatic behavior.

To begin with, we may note that such a sustained passage is not the kind of thing we ordinarily expect in a detective story or novel about crime. That it is there, and that comparable passages occur in all of Hammett's best work, clearly suggests the kind of transformation that Hammett was performing on this popular genre of writing. The transformation was in the direction of literature. And what the passage in question is about among other things is the ethical irrationality of existence, the ethical unintelligibility of the world. For Flitcraft the falling beam " 'had taken the lid off life and let him look at the works.' " The works are that life is inscrutable, opaque, irresponsible, and arbitrary—that human existence does not correspond in its actuality to the way we live it. For most of us live as if existence itself were ordered, ethical, and rational. As a direct result of his realization in experience that it is not, Flitcraft leaves his wife and children and goes off. He acts irrationally and at random, in accordance with the nature of existence. When, after a couple of years of wandering aimlessly about, he decides to establish a new life, he simply reproduces the old one he had supposedly repudiated and abandoned; that is to say, he behaves again as if life were orderly, meaningful, and rational, and "adjusts" to it. And this, with fine irony, is the part of it, Spade says, that he " 'always liked,' " which means that part that he liked best. For here we come upon the unfathomable and most mysteriously irrational part of it all—how despite everything we have learned and everything we know, men will persist in behaving and trying to behave sanely, rationally, sensibly, and responsibly. And we will continue to persist even when we know that there is no logical or metaphysical, no discoverable or demonstrable reason for doing so.[1] It is this sense of sustained contradiction that is close to the center—or to one of the centers—of Hammett's work. The contradiction is not ethical alone; it is metaphysical as well. And it is not merely sustained; it is sus-

1. It can hardly be an accident that the new name that Hammett gives to Flitcraft is that of an American philosopher—with two vowels reversed—who was deeply involved in just such speculations.

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tained with pleasure. For Hammett and Spade and the Op the sustainment in consciousness of such contradictions is an indispensable part of their existence and of their pleasure in that existence.

That this pleasure is itself complex, ambiguous, and problematic becomes apparent as one simply describes the conditions under which it exists. And the complexity, ambiguity, and sense of the problematical are not confined to such moments of "revelation"—or set pieces—as the parable of Flitcraft. They permeate Hammett's work and act as formative elements in its structure, including its deep structure. Hammett's work went through considerable and interesting development in the course of his career of twelve years as a writer. He also wrote in a considerable variety of forms and worked out a variety of narrative devices and strategies. At the same time, his work considered as a whole reveals a remarkable kind of coherence. In order to further the understanding of that coherence, we can propose for the purposes of the present analysis to construct a kind of "ideal type" of a Hammett or Op story. Which is not to say or to imply in the least that he wrote according to a formula, but that an authentic imaginative vision lay beneath and informed the structure of his work.

Such an ideal-typical description runs as follows. The Op is called in or sent out on a case. Something has been stolen, someone is missing, some dire circumstance is impending, someone has been murdered—it doesn't matter. The Op interviews the person or persons most immediately accessible. They may be innocent or guilty—it doesn't matter; it is an indifferent circumstance. Guilty or innocent, they provide the Op with an account of what they know, of what they assert really happened. The Op begins to investigate; he compares these accounts with others that he gathers; he snoops about; he does research; he shadows people, arranges confrontations between those who want to avoid one another, and so on. What he soon discovers is that the "reality" that anyone involved will swear to is in fact itself a construction, a fabrication, a fiction, a faked and alternate reality—and that it has been gotten together before he ever arrived on the scene. And the Op's work therefore is to deconstruct, decompose, deplot, and defictionalize that "reality" and to construct or reconstruct out of it a true fiction, i.e., an account of what "really" happened.

It should be quite evident that there is a reflexive and coordinate relation between the activities of the Op and the activities of Hammett, the writer. Yet the depth and problematic character of this self-reflexive

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process begin to be revealed when we observe that the reconstruction or true fiction created and arrived at by the Op at the end of the story is no more plausible—nor is it meant to be—than the stories that have been told to him by all parties, guilty or innocent, in the course of his work. The Op may catch the real thief or collar the actual crook—that is not entirely to the point. What is to the point is that the story, account, or chain of events that the Op winds up with as "reality" is no more plausible and no less ambiguous than the stories that he meets with at the outset and later. What Hammett has done—unlike most writers of detective or crime stories before him or since—is to include as part of the contingent and dramatic consciousness of his narrative the circumstance that the work of the detective is itself a fiction-making activity, a discovery or creation by fabrication of something new in the world, or hidden, latent, potential, or as yet undeveloped within it. The typical "classical" detective story—unlike Hammett's—can be described as a formal game with certain specified rules of transformation. What ordinarily happens is that the detective is faced with a situation of inadequate, false, misleading, and ambiguous information. And the story as a whole is an exercise in disambiguation—with the final scenes being a ratiocinative demonstration that the butler did it (or not); these scenes achieve a conclusive, reassuring clarity of explanation, wherein everything is set straight, and the game we have been party to is brought to its appropriate end. But this, as we have already seen, is not what ordinarily happens in Hammett or with the Op.

What happens is that the Op almost invariably walks into a situation that has already been elaborately fabricated or framed. And his characteristic response to his sense that he is dealing with a series of deceptions or fictions is—to use the words that he uses himself repeatedly—"to stir things up." This corresponds integrally, both as metaphor and in logical structure, to what happened in the parable of Flitcraft. When the falling beam just misses Flitcraft, " 'he felt like somebody had taken the lid off life.' " The Op lives with the uninterrupted awareness that for him the lid has been taken off life. When the lid has been lifted, the logical thing to do is to "stir things up"—which is what he does.[2] He actively undertakes to deconstruct, decom-

2. These homely metaphors go deep into Hammett's life. One of the few things that he could recall from his childhood past was his mother's repeated advice that a woman who wasn't good in the kitchen wasn't likely to be much good in any other room in the house.

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pose, and thus demystify the fictional—and therefore false—reality created by the characters, crooks or not, with whom he is involved. More often than not he tries to substitute his own fictional-hypothetical representation for theirs—and this representation may also be "true" or mistaken, or both at once. In any event, his major effort is to make the fictions of others visible as fictions, inventions, concealments, falsehoods, and mystifications. When a fiction becomes visible as such it begins to dissolve and disappear, and presumably should reveal behind it the "real" reality that was there all the time and that it was masking. Yet what happens in Hammett is that what is revealed as "reality" is a still further fiction-making activity—in the first place the Op's, and behind that yet another, the consciousness present in many of the Op stories and all the novels that Dashiell Hammett, the writer, is continually doing the same thing as the Op and all the other characters in the fiction he is creating. That is to say he is making a fiction (in writing) in the real world; and this fiction, like the real world itself, is coherent but not necessarily rational. What one both begins and ends with then is a story, a narrative, a coherent yet questionable account of the world. This problematic penetrates to the bottom of Hammett's narrative imagination and shapes a number of its deeper processes—in *The Dain Curse,* for example, it is the chief topic of explicit debate that runs throughout the entire novel.

Yet Hammet's writing is still more complex and integral than this. For the unresolvable paradoxes and dilemmas that we have just been describing in terms of narrative structure and consciousness are reproduced once again in Hammett's vision and representation of society, of the social world in which the Op lives. At this point we must recall that Hammett is a writer of the 1920s and that this was the era of Prohibition. American society had in effect committed itself to a vast collective fiction. Even more, this fiction was false not merely in the sense that it was made up or did not in fact correspond to reality; it was false in the sense that it was corrupt and corrupting as well. During this period every time an American took a drink he was helping to undermine the law, and American society had covertly committed itself to what was in practice collaborative illegality.[3] There is a kind of

3. Matters were even murkier than this. The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution was in effect from January 1920 to December 1933, nearly fourteen years. During this period Americans were forbidden under penalty of law to manufacture, sell, or transport any intoxicating liquor. At the same time, no one was forbidden to buy or

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epiphany of these circumstances in "The Golden Horseshoe." The Op is on a case tthat takes him to Tijuana. In a bar there, he reads a sign:

ONLY GENUINE PRE-WAR AMERICAN AND
BRITISH WHISKEYS SERVED HERE

He responds by remarking that "I was trying to count how many lies could be found in those nine words, and had reached four, with promise of more," when he is interrupted by some call to action. That sign and the Op's response to it describe part of the existential character of the social world represented by Hammett.

Another part of that representation is expressed in another kind of story or idea that Hammett returned to repeatedly. The twenties were also the great period of organized crime and organized criminal gangs in America, and one of Hammett's obsessive imaginations was the notion of organized crime or gangs taking over an entire society and running it as if it were an ordinary society doing business as usual. In other words, society itself would become a fiction, concealing and belying the actuality of what was controlling it and perverting it from within. One can thus make out quite early in this native American writer a proto-Marxist critical representation of how a certain kind of society works. Actually the point of viewis pre- rather than proto-Marxist, and the social world as it is dramatized in many of these stories is Hobbesian rather than Marxist.[4] It is a world of universal warfare, the war of each against all, and of all against all. The only thing that prevents the criminal ascendancy from turning into permanent tyranny is that the crooks who take over society cannot cooperate with one another, repeatedly fall out with each other, and return to the Hobbesian anarchy out of which they have momentarily arisen. The social world as imagined by Hammett runs on a principle that is the direct opposite of that postulated by Erik Erikson as the fundamental and enabling condition for human existence. In Hammett, society and

drink such liquor. In other words, Americans were virtually being solicited by their own laws to support an illegal trade in liquor, even while Congress was passing the Volstead Act which was intended to prevent such a trade.

4. Again it can hardly be regarded as an accident that the name Hammett gives to the town taken over by the criminals in *Red Harvest* is "Personville"—pronounced "Poisonville." And what else is Personville except Leviathan, the "artificial man" represented by Hobbes as the image of society itself.

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social relations are dominated by the principle of basic mistrust. As one of his detectives remarks, speaking for himself and for virtually every other character in Hammett's writing, " 'I trust no one.' "

When Hammett turns to the respectable world, the world of respectable society, of affluence and influence, of open personal and political power, he finds only more of the same. The respectability of respectable American society is as much a fiction and a fraud as the phony respectable society fabricated by the criminals. Indeed he unwaveringly represents the world of crime as a reproduction in both structure and detail of the modern capitalist society that it depends on, preys off, and is part of. But Hammett does something even more radical than this. He not only continually juxtaposes and connects the ambiguously fictional worlds of art and of writing with the fraudulently fictional worlds of society. He connects them, juxtaposes them, and sees them in dizzying and baffling interaction. He does this in many ways and on many occasions. One of them, for example, is the Maltese Falcon itself, which turns out to be and contains within itself the history of capitalism. It is originally a piece of plunder, part of what Marx called the "primitive accumulation"; when its gold encrusted with gems is painted over it becomes a mystified object, a commodity itself; it is a piece of property that belongs to no one—whoever possesses it does not really own it. At the same time it is another fiction, a representation or work of art—which turns out itself to be a fake, since it is made of lead. It is a rara avis indeed. As is the fiction in which it is created and contained, the novel by Hammett.

It is into this bottomlessly equivocal, endlessly fraudulent, and brutally acquisitive world that Hammett precipitates the Op. There is nothing glamorous about him. Short, thickset, balding, between thirty-five and forty, he has no name, no home, no personal existence apart from his work. He is, and he regards himself as, "the hired man" of official and respectable society, who is paid so much per day to clean it up and rescue it from the crooks and thieves who are perpetually threatening to take it over. Yet what he—and the reader—just as perpetually learn is that the respectable society that employs him is itself inveterately vicious, deceitful, culpable, crooked, and degraded. How then is the Op to be preserved, to preserve himself, from being contaminated by both the world he works against and the world he is hired to work for?

To begin with, the Op lives by a code. This code consists in the

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first instance of the rules laid down by the Continental Agency, and they are "rather strict." The most important of them by far is that no operative in the employ of the Agency is ever allowed to take or collect part of a reward that may be attached to the solution of a case. Since he cannot directly enrich himself through his professional skills, he is saved from at least the characteristic corruption of modern society—the corruption that is connected with its fundamental acquisitive structure. At the same time, the Op is a special case of the Protestant ethic, for his entire existence is bound up in and expressed by his work, his vocation. He likes his work, and it is honest work, done as much for enjoyment and the exercise of his skills and abilities as it is for personal gain and self-sustainment. The work is something of an end in itself, and this circumstance also serves to protect him, as does his deliberate refusal to use high-class and fancy moral language about anything. The work is an end in itself and is therefore something more than work alone. As Spade says, in a passage that is the culmination of many such passages in Hammett—

> "I'm a detective and expecting me to run criminals down and then let them go free is like asking a dog to catch a rabbit and let it go. It can be done, all right, and sometimes it is done, but it's not the natural thing."

Being a detective, then, entails more than fulfilling a social function or performing a social role. Being a detective is the realization of an identity, for there are components in it which are beyond or beneath society—and cannot be touched by it—and beyond and beneath reason. There is something "natural" about it. Yet if we recall that the nature thus being expressed is that of a man hunter, and Hammett's apt metaphor compels us to do so, and that the state of society as it is represented in Hammett's writing reminds us of the state of nature in Hobbes, we see that even here Hammett does not release his sense of the complex and the contradictory, and is making no simple-minded appeal to some benign idea of the "natural."

And indeed the Op is not finally or fully protected by his work, his job, his vocation. (We have all had to relearn with bitterness what multitudes of wickedness "doing one's job" can cover.) Max Weber has memorably remarked that "the decisive means for politics is violence." In Hammett's depiction of modern American society, violence is the decisive means indeed, along with fraud, deceit, treachery, betrayal,

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and general, endemic unscrupulousness. Such means are in no sense alien to Hammett's detective. As the Op says, " 'detecting is a hard business, and you use whatever tools come to hand.' " In other words, there is a paradoxical tension and unceasing interplay in Hammett's stories between means and ends; relations between the two are never secure or stable. And as Max Weber further remarked, in his great essay "Politics as a Vocation": "The world is governed by demons, and he who lets himself in for . . . power and force as means, contracts with diabolic powers, and for his action it is *not* true that good can follow only from good and evil only from evil, but that often the opposite is true. Anyone who fails to see this is, indeed, a political infant." Neither Hammett nor the Op is an infant; yet no one can be so grown up and inured to experience that he can escape the consequences that attach to the deliberate use of violent and dubious means.

These consequences are of various orders. "Good" ends themselves can be transformed and perverted by the use of vicious or indiscriminate means. (I am leaving to one side those even more perplexing instances in Hammett in which the ends pursued by the Op correspond with ends desired by a corrupted yet respectable official society.) The consequences are also visible inwardly, on the inner being of the agent of such means, the Op himself. The violence begins to get to him:

> I began to throw my right fist into him.
> I liked that. His belly was flabby, and it got softer every time I hit it. I hit it often.

Another side of this set of irresolvable moral predicaments is revealed when we see that the Op's toughness is not merely a carapace within which feelings of tenderness and humanity can be nourished and preserved. The toughness is toughness through and through, and as the Op continues his career, and continues to live by the means he does, he tends to become more callous and less and less able to feel. At the very end, awaiting him, he knows, is the prospect of becoming like his boss, the head of the Agency, the Old Man, "with his gentle eyes behind gold spectacles, and his mild smile, hiding the fact that fifty years of sleuthing had left him without any feelings at all on any subject." This is the price exacted by the use of such means in such a world; these are the consequences of living fully in a society moved by the principle of basic mistrust. "Whoever fights monsters," writes Nietz-

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sche, "should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you." The abyss looks into Hammett, the Old Man, and the Op.

It is through such complex devices as I have merely sketched here that Hammett was able to raise the crime story into literature. He did it over a period of ten years. Yet the strain was finally too much to bear —that shifting, entangled, and equilibrated state of contradictions out of which his creativity arose and which it expressed could no longer be sustained. His creative career ends when he is no longer able to handle the literary, social, and moral opacities, instabilities, and contradictions that characterize all his best work. His life then splits apart and goes in the two opposite directions that were implicit in his earlier, creative phase, but that the creativity held suspended and in poised yet fluid tension. His politics go in one direction; the way he made his living went in another—he became a hack writer, and then finally no writer at all. That is another story. Yet for ten years he was able to do what almost no other writer in this genre has ever done so well—he was able to really write, to construct a vision of a world in words, to know that the writing was about the real world and referred to it and was part of it; and at the same time he was able to be self-consciously aware that the whole thing was problematical and about itself and "only" writing as well. For ten years, in other words, he was a true creator of fiction.

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Harold Rosenberg

ART AND POLITICS (From the Note Book)

Avant-garde art, and avant-gardism in general, are at bottom comic. Vanguard art made its first public appearance at the Salon des Indépendents arranged under the mandate of Louis Bonaparte, Marx's Clown Prince. The primal avant-garde masterpiece is Manet's "Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe," in which two types dressed in bohemian style recline on the grass discussing art in the company of a fleshy nude. Modern artists as gods on Mount Olympus. This is the life!

While Marx waited in the London Museum for history to complete a noble pattern by means of "the revolution of the nineteenth century" (the Proletarian Revolution), Louis B, Emperor of La Bohème, inaugurated the age of farce — an age dominated not by material conditions but by the aesthetics of parody, based on the essentially monkey nature of man.

A true German classicist, Marx was convinced that civilization would somehow circle back to the Greeks, that is, to Greek literature: Sophoclean tragedy and Aristotelian philosophy. And this in spite of The Masses, Bottom's jolly crew that mimics and caricatures everything. While Marx's classical revolution was to be a repetition of the past on the highest intellectual level, Louis' actual revolution was repetition on the lowest level, that of nothing human is alien to me.

Along with the modern masses came the avant-garde, the self-appointed leaders inspired with the belief that they and their contemporaries could equal and surpass the greatest feats in history. If the best could not be duplicated in detail, it could be matched in essence. Any discrepancies would be taken light-heartedly. So Louis is not Napoleon the Great. Why should a naked girl on the grass, which delights

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the masses, prevent a painting from being a masterpiece?

The light-heartedness of the avant-garde was a philosophical declaration. Given the elements of modern life, including its art and its pieties, its basic message ran, every affirmation has a hollow core which the enlightened consciousness reflects in a grin or a grimace. The Dandy of modernism not only gets the joke but personifies it in a species of lyricism. *Carpe diem.*

Unfortunately, it is the fate of all vanguards to acquire a sense of historical role, to locate themselves in the foreground of the human drama as leaders and transformers of the masses, to transpose themselves into a Proletariat in the missionary sense.

At this point their light-heartedness peters out, and their aesthetics of parody is converted into plain aesthetics. Comic-lyrical creations, such as Cézanne's "A Modern Olympia," Matisse's "Joy of Life," Brancusi's "Bird," are designated as formal "breakthroughs," as if they provided a cure for diabetes. Copies of picnics on the grass, or just dribbles of green paint in fields of canvas, are promoted as masterpieces. Louis Bonaparte, with his dead stare and carefully calculated dignity, is transformed into a Marxist professor, who gives blackboard demonstrations of the historical processes that determine which paintings at the Salon des Indépendents have achieved QUALITY.

For myself, I have been repeatedly struck by surprise and embarrassment when an avant-garde artist (be it anyone — Picabia, Man Ray, Pollock) began to take himself with utter seriousness. Let me say in defense of the artists that they would never have fallen for this game had it not been for the art public, particularly for the art-historical screamers in it. Pollock, for example, had a sly side glance that said he knew that you knew he was putting one over.

(No, for God's sake! I am not saying that vanguard masters are not great artists. I am saying that they are ruined when the inescapable frivolous element is deleted.)

* * * * *

Duchamp and M. Teste. Valéry invented Duchamp as his emissary to New York.

In his early days Duchamp disrupted the settling down of art into a trade. The tradesmen shrieked, Charlatan! Lately, this cry has been

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raised again — this time by a critic who claims that to be avant-garde is to promote business as usual.

Duchamp's disruption was short-lived. To him the world, particularly the art world, aged very rapidly, and once for all. Duchamp had no idea of a renewal. He was immersed in superannuation, in *déjà vu*. The absence of novelty made him feel calm, like one transported into Plato's realm of ideas. This is the reward-punishment for getting to the bottom of things.

Duchamp was a model of how an avant-garde dies a natural death. In contrast to fake avant-gardes that keep agitating and reproducing themselves with the frenzy of micro-organisms.

WAR PAINT

America has the bad habit of insisting that important issues be dealt with "objectively" and that "descending into personalities" ought to be avoided. Thus battles of principle are confined to maneuvers permitted by professional decorum, and this gives an extraordinary advantage to hired arguers: lawyers, journalists, speech writers, public relations agents — in sum, to those who have subordinated their sense of values to the techniques and aims of persuasion.

Yet issues affecting human beings are almost always personified by individuals whom one instinctively hates or trusts. The personalities *are* the issues, and only by grasping an issue in terms of those who support it is it possible to decide correctly which side one is on. Often a position is obnoxious only because it is espoused by certain people, and by no one else. Could there be any value in objectively considering the ideas of Hitler or Stalin — or of Nixon on inflation? Better to "descend into personalities" without delay and decide whether you belong with them or with their enemies.

Another example is the so-called American conservatism: whatever its logic, it never brings forward a person of generous spirit.

* * * * *

THE PLAINS INDIANS VERSUS FALSTAFF

Falstaff: Honor is a mere scutcheon.
George Catlin: ". . . in this country where . . . men are the most jealous

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of rank and standing; and everyman's deeds of honor and chivalry are familiarly known to all; it would not be . . . safe to life for a warrior to wear upon his back the representations of battles he has never fought."

STUDENTS

The discontent of the students arises not so much from the routines of the university as from the routinization of *adult* life. It is against their future that the students revolt — a future the contents and quality of which are foreshadowed in the students' parents.

The student feels the routinized citizen growing inside him as a second self. In time it will absorb his personality like a fungus, and there will be left of his original "I" only a vague ache, like that which he catches a glimpse of in the face of his father while the latter is shaving.

Violence by students is thus primarily violence against themselves, a ritual of exorcism, designed to expel the traitor within — who whispers persuasively, "Behave decently and succeed."

In this pantomime the student makes use of the classical arsenal of identity struggles: costume, hair style, esoteric vocabulary.

As for students' action, its most troublesome aspect as far as adults are concerned is that defeat is as welcome as victory — and that hence no threats can prevail. To be beaten up by the police, thrown into jail, blacklisted, suspended or expelled from school — these are of the highest value as obstacles thrown in the path of the treacherous alter ego of respectability. Could Gerald Ford have become Gerald Ford if he had a bad record. To be on a police blotter is insurance against becoming Gerald Ford.

The way to prevent student trouble-making is not through counter-measures but through providing living models that demonstrate that thinking can constitute a desirable way of life. But this would require replacing most university faculties.

Probably, a more practical alternative would be to induct children into specialized social roles at a much earlier age. If by eight or ten, one already thought like an administrator, an accountant, a history instructor, the passage through graduate school into these callings could be relieved of tension and convulsive seizures.

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Work along similar lines has been carried on for years by a business-sponsored organization that trains kids to become capitalists by teaching them how to start an actual business, set up distribution, issue stocks, borrow money and show a profit. But this is nineteenth-century stuff — what percentage of the population today are going to found corporations? What's needed now is to train the young to fit into bureaucratic slots of huge organizations, public or private.

* * * * *

INTEGRATION OF ART INTO SOCIETY.

Arts festivals in the universities to fight the ennui of associate professors. A cocktail party every afternoon, with liquor and canapes supplied by the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities.

* * * * *

ART AND HISTORY.

Baudelaire was the first to introduce into art the idea of the Present. No one before him had thought that art had to be *timed.*

Nor that the ability to belong to one's epoch was a spiritual quality.

Thus Baudelaire forced both the artist and the critic to become mediums of their period. Visionaries of historical change.

Yet Baudelaire was not a "historicist." He hated the idea of Progress because it replaces the present with the future. And he condemned drugs because hallucination replaces the present with an artificial paradise.

For him the present was a metaphysical position, a crack in time where he could feel secure against both determinism and fantasy.

* * * * *

My conservatism: everything for the individual.
My radicalism: nothing for fictitious persons (corporations, the state).

* * * * *

THE ART WORLD

M — turned to painting in order to render himself less articulate. The

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maneuver was only partly successful. Words failed to fail him. He ended by writing on his canvases.

* * * * *

RE-DEFINITION

Pure Art is no longer a black rectangle or an unpainted canvas. It is art sold for a price so huge it strikes one blind and thus makes the painting itself invisible.

* * * * *

MARXIST ANALYSIS OF MINIMALISM

In its most vital moments the middle class conceived its own transcendence. Hence arose Superman, Socialism, avant-garde art.

But the professionals who now dominate middle-class society lack the impulse to transcendence. In ethics, politics, art they recognize only those elements that belong to the material reality of the subject, that is, legality, power, paint and canvas.

* * * * *

THE HUMAN INSTINCT

Disturbed children encouraged for therapeutic reasons to make spontaneous drawings soon began copying painstakingly examples of spontaneous drawings shown them by their teachers.

* * * * *

Chairman of the Museum Board of Directors: "Modernism is finished. Call the cops!"

* * * * *

POST-MODERNISM

People speak of "post-modern." They have in mind not a more advanced position than modernism, but on the contrary, a relaxation,

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a stopping short, or even a return to a state preceding the modernist excitement. Post-modernism is the epoch of worn out ideologies, even the anti- or endgame ideology of the sixties. No more vanguards, systems, dreams. No more radical tradition.

Yet post-modernism is not a "return to solid principles." It is innovation without aim, a policy of eccentricity — the mental habits of modernism but lacking its expectations.

When Duchamp drew a mustache on the Mona Lisa he demonstrated that for him art meant the Renaissance. A Duchamp today would be compelled to distribute mustaches among carvings from the Congo, East Indian tantras, pre-Columbian temple fragments, Navajo blankets.

In the post-modern period, art is anthropology. The basic model is folk art, with or without professional training. Modernism is inherently polemical; it *advocates* the present. By its very nature it generates vanguards, that is, representatives of the future who issue orders to those lagging behind that they must catch up. In post-modernism the present sinks back into the past. As for the future, it will be another CBS evening-news sign-off: "That's how it is . . ."

Put simply, the idea of post-modernism is that the time has come for all radical thinking and activity denoted by the word modernism to come to a halt. Henceforth, to keep striving to advance in any direction will be taken as a sign of backwardness.

The notion of post-modernism has one advantage: it normalizes the modern as a period that can be left behind, like other periods in history. In the post-modern age, for example, modern art is, for the first time, fully assimilable by the museum.

* * * * *

It is possible for an epoch to be struck dumb.

* * * * *

THE PATHOS OF THE PEOPLES: to be half way into a new world yet be unable to enter it. This is the material condition of millions on every continent.

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Frederick Crews

ANXIOUS ENERGETICS

"Words can be relied upon only so long as one is sure that their function is to reveal and not to conceal."

Hannah Arendt

Until fairly recently it seemed apparent that Wilhelm Reich, though a persistent presence in "left" or "advanced" circles since the 1940's, was fated eventually to be dismissed as a minor curiosity of American cultural history. The founder of character analysis and orgonomy, who died in disgrace in 1957 after being imprisoned as a cancer quack, has never been entirely forgotten, either as therapeutic innovator or as a prophet of sexual freedom. But the most prominent and sophisticated Reichians of the postwar period either gradually lost interest in his ideas or felt required to hedge them with major reservations, and Reich gradually became a remote and implausible figure whose zealous advocacy of the orgasm seemed more quaint than courageous.

Now, however, in a distinctly altered cultural atmosphere, Reich has begun to find something like the broad following he always expected. Political radicals and ex-radicals, whose hopes for a better society have become increasingly focused on an end to neurosis, admire him not only for his stand against capitalism and patriarchy, but for his rejection of "adjustment" as a therapeutic goal. Orgonomy and its offshoot "activity therapies" are attracting favorable notice from psychiatrists and psychologists who feel that psychoanalysis has proved itself too cumbersome and cautious for purposes of broad social hygiene. Reich's scientific propositions, once generally ridiculed, are the

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subject of numerous conferences and seminars. His major writings have been reissued in hardcover and paper editions, and he is himself the topic of other books, one of which implicitly ranks him in influence, if not in merit, among the "Modern Masters." Reich's particular version of antinomianism seems well suited to what one conference brochure calls "today's emphasis on sexual, political, and spiritual liberation" (see note at end of essay).

To some extent it might be said that Reich's own ideas helped to bring about the climate in which he is now being rehabilitated. Some of the radical intellectuals who had been drawn to his work in the forties became themselves propagators of body-centered therapy, uncoercive education, anti-authoritarian politics, and an ideology of dionysiac individualism. In England, A. S. Neill welcomed Reich as a philosophical ally in his efforts to promote the self-regulation and free development of children. In America, Paul Goodman and Frederick Perls used Reich, not Freud, as their point of departure when they fashioned Gestalt therapy; and Goodman, Dwight Macdonald, and others, accepting the Reichian insight that "a coercive society depends upon instinctual repression," invoked Reich as the patron of a sensuous and decentralized new politics. In addition, Reich was admired for diverse reasons by Saul Bellow, Isaac Rosenfeld, Norman Mailer, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs. Although none of these writers forwarded the more practical aspects of orgonomy, all of them can be presumed to have influenced the development of a "Reichian" cultural atmosphere.

If the early phase of Reichianism can teach us anything about the present one, it is that ideological and temperamental affinities are likely to be more important than intellectual agreement with Reich's ideas. In the forties and fifties those ideas were largely untested and only vaguely understood by many of Reich's most ardent followers. Psychological and political radicals turned to Reich not because they found him a more careful student of the world than Marx and Freud, but because they felt historically disinherited and stymied. By the forties Freudian doctrine, which had once seemed so exhilaratingly resistant to every form of authority, was suspected of conformist tendencies, and so in a grimmer sense was Marxism in its Stalinist guise. In the gloom of the Cold-War years, intellectuals whose historicism had been shaken faced the choice of either accommodating themselves to a prosperous anti-Communist society or taking a stand directly on what

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Mailer, citing Reich, called "the rebellious imperatives of the self." It was evidently Reich's irrefutably vague optimism, rather than his specific notions about orgasm or work-democracy or orgone energy, that answered the embattled radicals' mood. As Theodore Solotaroff has said of Isaac Rosenfeld, "The very extremism of Reich's system — as over against the Freudian — must have commended it in this time of extremity . . ." To be a Reichian, with or without acceptance of Reich's claim to have discovered the life force in Cosmic Orgone Energy, was to seek contact, as Mailer in "The White Negro" wrote, with "God . . . located in the senses of [one's] body, that trapped, mutilated and nonetheless megalomaniacal God who is It, who is energy, life, sex, force, the Yoga's *prana*, the Reichian's orgone, Lawrence's 'blood,' 'Hemingway's 'good'. . . " In Mailer's hands the orgasmic principle became a license to hurl oneself against "every social restraint and category," to break "those mutually contradictory inhibitions against violence and love which civilization has exacted of us."

This same diffuse rebelliousness still animates many Reichians, especially those political activists of the sixties who, like their thwarted counterparts after World War II, have been regrouping around the banner of "radical psychiatry." They too, it seems, respond more to Reich's mood of visionary defiance than to the fine points of orgonomy. So do radical feminists like Kate Millett and Juliet Mitchell, who value Reich (with stern qualifications) for prefiguring their own stance against patriarchal oppression.

Yet we can no longer be so certain that Reich's current appeal is entirely ideological. In contast to the early admirers who had only an approximate sense of his scientific claims, many now argue in detail that he was primarily a great investigator of nature. Instead of observing the once-customary practice of distinguishing between "constructive" and "wild" phases in Reich's career, they tend to embrace it in its entirety, excepting only the last four or five years in which Reich, by then unquestionably paranoid, fancied himself a messenger from outer space and a veteran of interplanetary war. Even the most moderate of Reich's recent exegetes, such as W. Edward Mann and David Boadella, are ready to defend not only the relatively accessible ideas about character armor and the orgasm reflex, but the whole chain of Reich's subsequent assertions about electrophysiology, plasma flow, radiation, cancer pathology, weather control, and so forth.

By far the best case for this new assessment is the one made by

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Boadella, who, by tracing Reich's career from each hypothesis to the next and recapitulating the conditions and results of his major experiments — meanwhile documenting the often shameful tactics of his opponents — shows the logical and evidential basis of ideas that might otherwise look like sheer science fiction. Reich, Boadella maintains, was drawn reluctantly to his conclusions by unanticipated, unanswerable findings. Those conclusions, he says, may have been only approximate first efforts, but the findings remain and must be dealt with by anyone who would challenge Reich's credibility. Where the original reports and case-studies are missing, blame must be laid on the American government for the indiscriminate book-burning that was inflicted on Reich in 1956. And as for the prima facie implausibility of one man's making major breakthroughs in psychiatry, physiology, chemistry, biology, medicine, meteorology, physics, and astronomy, we must suspend judgment and grant Reich the synthetic nature of his enterprise. As an "energetic functionalist" Reich looked for unifying principles that would characterize life in all its forms. There is every reason to suppose that such principles exist, and no reason to doubt that they could be at least roughly sketched by a genius who devoted thirty years to isolating them. The clinching argument, for Mann as well as Boadella, is that later, independent researches in ionization, cosmic rays, geomagnetic forces, pollution, body auras, and psychosomatic medicine have turned up hard facts that Reich had been getting at in his idiosyncratic way.

My own ignorance of laboratory procedures, combined with my sense that normal science is moving rapidly toward integrative understanding of life-processes and even toward rapprochement with elements of "the occult," makes me hesitate to criticize this reasoning. Reich has at least been vindicated in overriding the conventional borders between mind and body and in depicting all creatures as energy fields interacting with energy streams of cosmic origin. Some Reichian ideas that were dismissed as primitivism by Philip Rieff and Charles Rycroft now seem much less outlandish than they did just a few years ago. Nor do I wish to deny that many of the effects Reich observed may have been real. On the contrary, the one incontestable fact about Reich is that he was a charismatic person in whose presence odd things tended to happen, not just to himself but to experimental subjects and witnesses. (Whether he made sufficient allowance for this exceptional influence in drawing laws from his experience is another question.) It seems fair to think of Reich as a figure comparable to Franz Mesmer,

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who, in another century dominated by mechanistic physics, correctly emphasized the importance of energy transactions which neither he nor anyone else could reconcile with existing knowledge.

To see Reich in these terms, however, is not at all to settle the issue of his cultural or ideological meaning. Like Mesmer himself, Reich owes his popularity not to the approval of scientific colleagues, but to the charm his ideas exert on people who are generally sympathetic to life-affirming and unitary theories — in a word, to romantics. Efforts like Boadella's to assimilate Reich's work to the perspective of normal science may obscure the fact that Reichianism has been in several ways an *anti*-scientific movement, holding out promises that are seductive precisely because of the contrast they make with the austerity and fragmented awareness of science as usually practiced. As a structure of postulates orgonomy is open to the charge of tautology, but this apparent defect can be an advantage to people who want their revolutionary certitude kept secure from intrusion.

Reich was remarkably candid about the unorthodox relation between his findings and his presuppositions. He observed that his experiments were directed, not merely toward testing his hypotheses, but above all toward suppressing his misgivings about them. He mustered the courage "to go on in spite of disturbing and apparently negative findings in control experiments; not to invalidate new facts with superficial controls; *always to check negative control findings personally;* and, finally, not to give in to the temptation of saying, 'It was just an illusion' " (*SW,* p. 206; italics in original). When traditional methods and devices failed to detect the phenomena Reich believed in, he resorted to "special, hitherto unknown, methods and research procedures" that would yield the desired results (*SW,* p. 196). Believing that *"man cannot feel or imagine anything that has no real, objective existence in one form or another"* (*SW,* p. 210; italics in original), he found his proofs in such subjective impressions as his subordinates' headaches, the appearance of spots before his closed eyes, otherwise unaccountable feelings of rage, and an absence of "sparkle" in the landscape. Even allowing for the handicaps of exile and persecution under which Reich operated, we have to notice a strong element of wishfulness in these practices.

Then, too, there was Reich's eccentric way of shielding his supposed discoveries from criticism. As Ola Raknes naïvely states, in *Wilhelm Reich and Orgonomy,*

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> One of the common criticisms against Reich was that, instead of repeating and varying an experiment so as to detect any possible source of error, "as scientists should do," he would trust his findings, as soon as he had been able to place them in some rational connection, and go on to new discoveries. What his critics did not know was that in most cases he would keep his discoveries to himself, sometimes for years, until they led him to new discoveries, which was his criterion for the validity of a finding. (p. 67)

Reich, in other words, hid his experimental results from the scientific community while using them as a basis for further inferences, then taking the latter as confirmation of the former. This combination of secretiveness and dogmatism constituted a fundamental break with the empirical spirit — a spirit, we should note, whose cardinal point isn't the forming of hypotheses based on observations, but the submitting of those hypotheses to the fullest scrutiny according to agreed-upon criteria of adequacy.

The keystone of Reich's science is an unwillingness to be judged by rational skepticism. That skepticism, because it remains unmoved by "subjective organ sensations" (*SW*, p. 209), is itself condemned as a debility of overcivilization. "It is those who feel only very little or nothing at all," says Boadella, "who need most desperately to deny the existence of an energy which, once accepted, would make obvious the fact that their organ sensations were seriously disturbed" (p. 177). Hence no one outside Reich's circle of believers can be trusted as a critic of orgonomy. When such intruders do presume to attack Reich, they are merely displaying their own orgastic deficiency. Only those whose "own organismic energy can function freely" (Raknes, p. 50) deserve to be heard, and this free functioning — reachable by inhibited moderns through the one avenue of orgone treatment — produces a new style of sensuous knowing. Instead of abstractly investigating the world, the adept lives with the truth as a practical mystic, listening to the "objectively expressive language" of orgonotic streamings (*RSF*, p. 63n.).

This is not to say, however, that orgonomy makes its claims on a forthrightly mystical basis. Reich always insisted that he was a strict materialist who had, to his own satisfaction at least, demonstrated his propositions. No one ever maintained more adamantly that all phenomena are physical and that all philosophy is illusion; the Blakean rules Reich detected in the universe were presented as mere inferences from meter-readings. This double emphasis, at once hortatory and positivistic, gave Reich a rhetorical advantage over avowedly anti-

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scientific thinker. Orgonomy amounts to what Michael Polanyi, in his book *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy,* thinking of Marxism, defined as a dynamo-objective coupling, in which "Alleged scientific assertions, which are accepted as such because they satisfy moral passions, will excite these passions further, and thus lend increased convincing power to the scientific affirmations in question — and so on, indefinitely." As Polanyi adds, "such a dynamo-objective coupling is also potent in its own defence. Any criticism of its scientific part is rebutted by the moral passion behind it, while any moral objections to it are coldly brushed aside by invoking the inexorable verdict of its scientific findings."

The analogy with Marxism is not a casual one. Reich was among other things a theorist of dialectical materialism who, for a while at least, reflected all the sanguine historicism of the original Marxist vision. Like his old Berlin comrade Arthur Koestler, he didn't simply evolve into a fervent anti-Communist when history failed to obey the script, but also sublimated his transcendent expectations into "revolutionary" scientific doctrine. The exit from history that Marx had posited in temporal terms as the proletariat's eventual triumph was transposed into a repeal of the laws of physical necessity, and the now-dubious power of the masses became the power — sexual, perceptual, even mystical — of the sufficient self. Unlike Koestler, however, Reich continued to present himself as an explicitly political revolutionary, thus sparing his followers the necessity of choosing between Tamburlaïne and Faust. Somehow the spread of erotic freedom and the harnessing of orgone energy would result in an end to capitalism and patriarchy — the very outcome that seemed unreachable through traditional means of struggle. Meanwhile the secondary benefits of revolutionism, such as elite membership, privileged insight, a sense of evangelical mission, and faith in the future, could be found in a movement organized around supposed truths about nature.

The rallying point of Reich's new creed was the orgasm, an eloquent choice on several counts. In the first place, the experience is a private one, in marked contrast to the proletariat's assumption of state power. In a time of shattered public expectations, local orgastic success or the illusion of it can be taken as proof that the revolution is going forward after all. Again, as an immediate and total release of tension, the orgasm is an ideal vehicle for a drastically compressed historicism: the fulfillment that was to have worked itself out through decades of

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class struggle becomes a matter of personal ecstasy. The orgasm, furthermore, is defined in part as a blotting-out of consciousness — inevitably including consciousness of setbacks in more orthodox political ventures. We have already seen how Reich's subjectivist posture insulates his whole system from criticism. Within that system the mute and obliterative orgasm serves as a refuge from unwelcome surprises, pessimistic reflections, fruitless calculation — even from language itself, the medium of thinking too precisely on the event.

The flight from language and intellection becomes especially pertinent when we consider the centrality of Reich's quarrel with Freud. Orgonomy was devised as an inversion not of Marxism but of psychoanalysis, the talking cure, in which "making the unconscious conscious" is the therapeutic aim. That aim obviously depends on a broader consensus that rationality and control are worth striving for. By putting the orgasm in the place of self-knowledge, Reich addresses not only thwarted radicals and scarred veterans of psychoanalysis, but many others who now feel that rational consciousness and inhibition are synonymous. The fortunes of orgonomy seem tied to the currency of this sentiment more than any other.

Thus Reich has become the posthumous beneficiary of a widespread demoralization in our culture, a weakening of the once-axiomatic belief that conduct should be guided by reason. In a subtle and paradoxical way, that belief had already been eroded by Freud, who honored it with such apparent tenacity. It was Reich's destiny to expose the ethical ambiguity of Freud's psychology and to resolve it on the side of irrationalism. For people who want to forsake neither their insurrectionary sentiments nor their yearning for transcendent meaning, Reich held out desublimation as a quasi-religious goal.

Modern psychologies in general, as the successors to a moribund faith, have tried not simply to describe how mental equilibrium is maintained, but to put forward that equilibrium as an ethical ideal, persuading a restless, doctrinally confused public that sanity in this world, though more problematical than anyone once supposed, is in itself a worthy goal of striving. The full difficulty of this project can be observed in the stoic Freud, who urged us to restrain our impulses but denied that we possess a native conscience; who made self-knowledge his ideal but characterized the mind as a self-deceiving organ; and who plunged us into the chthonian unconscious while steadfastly maintaining the humdrum secular norm of healthy functioning. In his role

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as ironic physician Freud refused to set his sights beyond what he called ordinary human unhappiness, but as a Nietzschean *conquistador,* challenging the whole basis of Western conscious rationality, he encouraged utopian speculations about abolishing repression. In retrospect it seems inevitable that ideologies such as Reich's would rush in to satisfy the appetite for catharsis that Freud had both whetted and disdained.

When Reich described himself as the one faithful interpreter of libido theory he was making a perfectly cogent claim. What he did was to pick up the mechanistic side of Freud's thought and accept its consequences unreservedly. It was Freud, not Reich, who first supposed that all mental acts were theoretically traceable to missed gratification, and who posited the idea of "actual neuroses" stemming from dammed-up libido. It was also Freud who extended psychoanalytic speculation to prehistory and the cellular level; whose notion of the superego implied that social compliance comes about through the internalization of paternal castration threats; and whose account of culture depicted every gain for order as stolen from sexuality. Reich's instinctual demonology is recognizably Freud's own, set loose from the misgivings that prompted Freud to superimpose a vocabulary of motives on his vocabulary of cathexes. It merely remained for Reich to ideologize tension-release as a *summum bonum* which, in the light of Freud's own energy hydraulics, could be attained through removal of every social demand upon the individual.

Thus Reich's disagreement with Freud can be understood as an endorsement of extremist implications in Freud's own thought. Freud's retraction, in the 1920's, of the idea that all anxiety was blocked libido signified a retreat from an exclusively sexual etiology of the neuroses — a retreat that Reich interpreted in political terms as an accommodation to a repressive society. Whether or not he was correct in this inference, Reich himself assuredly had extrascientific reasons for insisting that the original "quantitative factor" be retained. Libido, after all, was a metaphorical concept, not a physical substance that could be observed by either Freud or Reich. When Freud downplayed libido he was making room for an ego-psychology of motives, defenses, and adaptations; when Reich championed libido he was rejecting all such mentalistic categories so as to retain a determinism with eschatological implications. If neuroses were caused by sexual deprivation alone, then one could lay all blame for unhappiness on the

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(paternal) inhibitors of sexuality, speak confidently about a single, real human nature behind the twisted masks of character, and justify the peremptory removal of those masks in the patients' best interest. Libido was Reich's revolutionary leverage, the promised manna that would be plentiful after the social and intrapsychic overthrow of the superego.

This conceptual sparring acquires concrete and far-reaching import when translated into clinical practice. From the beginning of his association with psychoanalysis Reich felt galled by the length of treatment, by the analyst's supposed neutrality and inconspicuousness, and by the patient's seemingly endless dodges and deceptions. What he wanted was to make the patient over into the free and open person that he, Reich, knew was trapped beneath the character-armor. His Pygmalion impulse found its earliest outlet in a critique of Freudian method — a critique which was trenchant and shrewd, for Reich in his restlessness was able to see that the apparent compliance of patients was likely to be a pseudocompliance masking a continued hostility to the analysis. No one should suppose, however, that the Reich of *Character Analysis* (1933) was simply repairing a weakness in analytic procedure. Rather, he was revoking the whole Freudian therapeutic alliance and putting in its place a relationship more congenial to his hectoring disposition. Now the analyst would be a hero, daring to thwart the patient's resistances at every point, to take the full fury of his aggression, and then to crush his defensive system so that an ideal "genital character" could emerge.

Whatever the merits of this approach, it constituted a reversal of psychoanalytic ethics, whereby the therapist must try to refrain from passing judgment on the patient's conscious values. "Full orgastic potency" as Reich conceived it was not something his patients had hoped to attain when they came to him, but a distant ideal which *he* told *them* was the proper object of human striving, and which he regarded as beyond the reach of civilized man under capitalism. Only by joining Reich's worldwide crusade could the patient hope to bring about the preconditions of complete mental health for himself and others. Submitting not just to the therapist's manipulations but to Reich's social vision as well, the patient was evidently meant to undergo a conversion experience and become a disciple — with or without "cure" in the conventional sense.

It is no secret, of course, that discipleship can be curative, offering

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as it does a resurgence of faith in a guiding parent-figure and a meaningful life. As one case-history may illustrate, the "religious" aspect of orgonomy is paramount for people who are not so much sick as confused and starved for purpose. In his book-length narrative of a Reichian treatment at the hands of Dr. Elsworth Baker, the actor Orson Bean patiently accepts Reich as a savior *(Me and the Orgone).* Bean never tells us what, if anything, was wrong with his biosystem before Dr. Baker began pushing and pedalling it, but he does say that simply by reading one of Reich's books he discovered the meaning of existence. For someone who has experienced one true orgasm, he then realized, "the question of what life is all about never has to be asked again." His own "messianic fervor" to convert others seems to have resulted chiefly from his empathy with the martyred leader. Reich, Bean tells us, was hounded by "the little character assassins of the world," who falsely accused him of having been a Communist and of pretending to cure cancer. In reality he was "one of the greatest men in the history of the human race." Thus, "Reich was one of the few true revolutionaries who ever lived and I had decided to join the revolution." Now filled with a Reichian sense of license, Bean and his new wife can "look up into the sky to see the little units of orgone energy tumbling and popping around in the atmosphere"; and he draws strength from knowing that those orgones "don't care about any of it, do they?" He has become, as it were, homeophathically delusional, light-heartedly believing himself the beneficiary of special powers and therefore feeling lively enough to carry out ordinary Christian ideas about marriage and service in a fallen world.

When a therapy of total conversion produces such a benign outcome, we must give some credit to the convert's inherent stability. With less secure patients the effect may be altogether different. Bean himself remarks that the cracking of character-armor causes severe "orgasm anxiety," an ultimate terror of letting go, and that "The only cure for it is to learn to tolerate it and hope that it will diminish" (Bean, p. 89)). But suppose it doesn't diminish? "It is especially in the last phases of treatment," says Ola Raknes, "when the patient feels the orgonotic streamings as irresistible but dares not surrender to them, that the danger of suicide may be imminent and that all the skill of the therapist is needed to avert it" (Raknes, p. 125). Rycroft points out that one of Reich's own patients, Nic Waal, felt personally helped by the therapy but recalled that Reich's "cruel and penetrating technique"

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had tragic effects on some people, who "became either crushed or obsessively oppositional or projective . . ." And Reich himself, in a temporarily recanting mood, confessed to Kurt Eissler in 1952 that the whole idea of trying to dissolve character

> is very dangerous. You see, the armor, thick as it is and as bad as it is, is a protective device, and it is good for the individual under present social and psychological circumstances to have it. He couldn't live otherwise. That is what I try to teach my doctors today. I tell them I am glad they don't succeed in breaking down that armor because people, who have grown up with such structures, are used to living with them. If you take that away, they break down. They can't, they just can't live any longer . . . . if you would break down all of the armoring in the world today, there would be chaos. Perfect chaos! Murder everywhere! (*RSF*, p. 110)

Even this negative statement, which has evidently had no deterrent effect on Reich's movement, clearly indicates that the scope of orgonomic treatment is nothing less than the removal of the individual's adaptive apparatus. That apparatus stands under indictment as the product of unwanted (i.e., societal) influences. Whether or not he retains his sanity, the patient will at least have been purged of evil. And what is sanity, after all? As Reich learned more of nature's secrets he began to value the wisdom of psychotics, whose ideas so amazingly resembled his own. In a case history, for example, he praised the lucidity of a schizophrenic patient bedevilled by "forces": "What deep thought, and how close to the truth! I assure the reader that at that time she knew nothing of the orgone phenomena and that I had not told her anything about them." Without denying his original aim of securing orgastic potency, he came to treasure the emergence of the buried self in vatic form. Thus, in a halting and inconsistent way, Reich foreshadowed the fully inverted value-system of his admirer R. D. Laing, who has decreed *(The Politics of Experience)* that "True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego, that false self competently adjusted to our alienated social reality; the emergence of the 'inner' archetypal mediators of divine power, and through this death a rebirth, and the eventual re-establishment of a new kind of ego-functioning, the ego now being the servant of the divine, no longer its betrayer."

We needn't be surprised, then, to learn that Reich's fanatically materialistic system gradually acquired all the superficial features of a religion. Orgonomy as finally elaborated possesses a pantheistic deity

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(the Cosmic Orgone Energy Ocean), a devil of sorts (Deadly Orgone Energy), an earthly heaven (the elusive but ever-beckoning perfect orgasm), a lost paradise (our matriarchal prehistory), an original sin (the imposition of patriarchy and sexual denial), a righteous animus toward evil (Reich's fulmination against every detumescent influence), and a body of disciples trained to evoke and bestow a holy substance that is invisible to unbelievers. And it has Reich himself explicitly playing Christ, a role he could not refuse after perceiving that the seemingly ascetic Jesus had been an ideal genital character who was crucified for anticipating orgonomy (see *The Murder of Christ: The Emotional Plague of Mankind).* These parallels suggest, not that Reichianism is a religion, but that by virtue of its *contemptus mundi* it is structurally and rhetorically akin to one. Materialism such as Reich's elides into religious prophecy because its intent is to negate the Actual and make way for the Real, the suppressed inner kingdom.

No doubt a similar need for purgative negation informs all revolutionary dialectic, whatever its manifest goals; the more successful a movement is in pursuing those goals, the more easily the revolutionist can bury his negativity in practical work. What makes Reich a typical figure for our time is precisely the unmediated, insatiable quality of his apocalyptic drive, which finds nothing in reality to pause over for long. By casting himself as Christ, Reich at once confesses his worldly failure and makes a virtue of it, setting himself off from an ever wider conspiracy of persecutors who are blamed for his bad moods and lost opportunities. And paranoid though it may be, this strategy has a resonant effect on others who feel cheated by history, disillusioned with the customary radical mottoes, and therefore all the more goaded by iconoclastic passion.

It may be, indeed, that Reichianism chiefly provides its supporters with "scientific" validation of defenses against a loss of boundary between oneself and a menacing outer world. Sensations of emptiness and vulnerability flourish in an age when secure adversary identities (the revolutionist, the radical intellectual, the avant-garde artist) appear to be swallowed within an all-assimilating, all-cheapening sociopolitical system. The scarcity of recognizable *others,* whose differentness would permit a clear and purposeful self-definition on one's own part, may be an underrated factor contributing to modern anxiety. Norman Mailer felt it in the fifties when he was drawn toward Reichian energetics because he feared being "jailed in the prison air of

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other people's habits, other people's defeats, boredom, quiet desperation, and muted icy self-destroying rage" (*Advertisements*, p. 313), and the same sensation is again common today, after the interlude of polarization and activism provided by the Vietnam war. Quite ordinary citizens as well as romantic anarchists now feel themselves to be rebuffed by standardized surroundings, enmeshed in automated procedures, assailed by motivational conditioning, awash in trivia, merged with their neighbors and at a loss to know whom to blame or how the nets of dependency can be undone. Such a time is bound to be auspicious for purveyors of happiness, and doubly so for those who can stir up the old conviction that there is a simple battle to be won after all, a cause that lends historical consequence to one's own oppositional drive.

Although it may seem perverse to argue that a radically optimistic vision such as Reich's succeeds largely by mobilizing feelings of inadequacy and desperation, those feelings are just what we might expect to find undergirding any structure of manic affirmation. In Reich's case they are plainly apparent. The essence of orgonomy is that one's vital currents are always being either enhanced or drained away, and that hence one can never be too careful about one's contacts. Despite his rhetoric of comradeship and cooperation, Reich can only be understood as sponsoring a jealous guarding of the self against a suspect world. Thus the ostensible aim of a loving mutuality is pursued through emphasis on one's own pelvic unblocking, one's own libido, one's own orgasm; and thus there is a hysterical urgency in Reich's proclamations that life need *not* be utterly oppressive, that children *can and must* break the death-grip exerted by their parents, that heterosexual genitality *is* approachable despite society's concerted and sinister opposition to it. Reich's declaration that life-energy is everywhere denies that it is nowhere. That denial was personally necessary to Reich, I gather, in order to abate his fear of being contaminated by others: "I have to save my clean thoughts," Reich told Kurt Eissler in 1952. "I have to maintain a cleanliness, a purity. Freud didn't succeed in that, and you can see it in his face." But it is also received as a blessing by people who, for good historical reasons, experience themselves as manipulated, depleted, and swept toward a paralytic apathy.

That the blessing is genuinely beneficial for most of those who accept it cannot be doubted. The preponderant testimony of Reichian patients is that they have come to feel more at home with their bodies and more capable of useful action. Yet the prevalence in our society of

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Reichianism and related doctrines may be evidence of a reduced tolerance, in the dual sense of a diminished willingness to allow others to be themselves and a reduced capacity to withstand stress.

Whatever its successes, orgonomy is a therapy of imposition in which the patient's value-system is forcibly assailed and replaced by the doctor's, which is presumed superior because it comes straight from the inspired teachings of Reich. Americans like to consider themselves resistant to such authoritarianism, but in a time of identity-diffusion many people become at once more restive and more credulous, demanding that their minds be ravished by an infallible guru. Perhaps they stop short of commitment to overtly dictatorial schemes, such as Reich's proposal that anxiety-free sexuality be enforced by state decree. But they are caught up by the general notion that freedom consists in the overthrow of customs, institutions, family ties, even the canons of scientific objectivity, all of which are thought to violate the supreme right of the inner self to find expression. Such a belief illustrates and hastens the shrinkage of horizons toward an anxious personal narcissism, with a consequent readiness to embrace any propositions that shore up that narcissism. A sense of exposure resulting in part from a loss of cultural sustenance causes the remaining fragments of tradition to be mistaken for the real source of unhappiness, and the process of deracination is then accelerated into a euphoric ideological program.

If this development is due in part to irreversible processes at work in the modern world, it is also traceable to an ethical assumption that can be consciously reconsidered. The assumption was originally Freud's, not Reich's: it was the belief, founded on positivistic nineteenth-century science, that "normal functioning" should be pursued as the highest end of existence. Once that belief leaves the hands of an ironic humanist like Freud, all conventional aspects of life, all bonds between generations, all disciplines whose mastery requires postponement of gratification can be made to appear as intolerable threats to somatic fulfillment. It is a short step, as we have seen, from Freud's distinctly horrific conception of the superego to Reich's decision that the superego must be smashed. And it is just another step, one that happens to span the arc of Reich's own career, to the compensatory idea of control over divine energies, for the new antagonism to "society" requires that the self find its guardian in higher circles.

In the end, for Reich and many others who have tried to use psy-

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chology as an all-sufficient ethical guide, the world can be made safe for genitality only through cultic delusion, and perhaps not even then. Such examples ought to remind us that man truly "functions normally" when his attention is directed beyond his immediate well-being — when he is involved with people and places, institutions and principles, that sustain him even as they shape and limit him. To those who accept this point at all, it is a truism; but it is one that casts a devastating light on much romantic radicalism of the past quarter-century.

NOTE: Program, *Symposium on Orgone Energy and Bio-energetics* (Berkeley: KPFA, 1974), p. 2. Farrar, Straus and Giroux and its Noonday imprint have now republished Reich's *The Cancer Biopathy, Character Analysis, Ether, God and Devil and Cosmic Superimposition, The Function of the Orgasm, The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality, Listen, Little Man!, The Mass Psychology of Fascism, The Murder of Christ, Reich Speaks of Freud, Selected Writings,* and *The Sexual Revolution.* Writings from Reich's period as an active leftist have been collected in *Sex-Pol: Essays, 1929-1934,* ed. Lee Baxandall (New York: Vintage, 1972). A leading disciple, Ola Raknes, has surveyed Reich's career in *Wilhelm Reich and Orgonomy* (1970; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin, 1971). Reich is viewed skeptically by Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (1966; rpt. New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, 1968) and by Charles Rycroft, *Wilhelm Reich* (New York: Viking, 1971); this is the book in the "Modern Masters" series. His importance to the cultural left has been explored by Paul A. Robinson, *The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Geza Roheim, Herbert Marcuse* (1969; rpt. New York: Harper Colophon, n.d.) and by Richard King, *The Party of Eros: Radical Social Thought and the Realm of Freedom* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1972). In *Orgone, Reich and Eros: Wilhelm Reich's Theory of Life Energy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973) W. Edward Mann presents Reich as one of the foremost modern geniuses, though an eccentric and intemperate one. Eustace Chesser gives Reich high marks as a therapeutic innovator in *Salvation Through Sex: The Life and Work of Wilhelm Reich* (New York: Morrow, 1973). Reich's practical political activism is emphasized by Michel Cattier, *The Life and Work of Wilhelm Reich,* tr. Ghislaine Boulanger (1971; rpt. New York: Avon, 1973). His world-view is enthusiastically defended by Elsworth Baker, *Man in the Trap* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), Orson Bean, *Me and the Orgone: The True Story of One Man's Sexual Awakening* (1971; rpt. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Crest, 1972), and James Wyckoff, *Wilhelm Reich: Life Force Explorer* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1973). His reputation as a martyr is enhanced by Jerome Greenfield, *Wilhelm Reich versus the USA* (New York: Norton, 1974). And the most comprehensive discussion of Reich's scientific claims is David Boadella, *Wilhelm Reich: The Evolution of his Work* (Chicago: Regnery, 1973).

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POEMS

LINK CHAIN

Palm Sunday. Banana leaves
Loll in the breaklight. Back home, on Ravine Street
25 years ago, Philbeck and I
Would count the crosses, arrange
The pins on their silver plate, and bank
On a full house. The palm crosses, tiny
And off-green against their purple cloth,
Are stacked like ricks for the match flame. 11 o'clock.
I take a cross and 2 pins—
One for the cross, and one again for the heart.

On the front seat of a Yellow Coach,
Pistol Red at the wheel, 10 miles this side of Surgoinsville
On US 11-W, I'd lay my body down, in Tennessee,
For the 1st time. The 2nd time
I'd pick a tree, black cherry,
That grows on the north side of Chestnut Ridge, and looks out
Over the Cumberlands;
I'd build a floor and face west.
For number 3, I'd float in a boat down river,
Whatever river, and be a leaf.

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Circle by circle, link chain
And hair breath, I'm bound to the oak mulche, those leaves
Stuffed in their croker sacks
My brother and I were sent for each week-end
In Autumn, in Moody's Woods, to drag back
Up Hog Hill and feed the shredder with.
Later, confettied and packed tight in their little mounds,
They warmed the milk root and the slip stalk.
Later still, and less coarse, they'll warm me,
Bone stock and finger peg, the cold room.

From this pocket to that pocket, bright coin
Whose slot in the crossed box was cut
38 years ago, and cut well,
I roll through the world, Peter's pence
For the red clay, defrocked and worn smooth,
The payment in someone's hand.
Lord of the Anchorite, wind-blown bird,
Dangle your strings and hook me.
I am the gleam in your good eye, I am your ticket;
Take me up, and drop me where I belong.

Each tree I look at contains my coffin,
Each train brings it closer home.
Each flower I cut, I cut for a plastic vase
Askew on the red dirt, the oak trees
Whisking their wash in the May wind.
Each root I uncover uncovers me.
Below, 19 By-Pass swings straight to the state line
5 miles north, Virginia across the bridge—
Each car is the car that brings
That tree to earth, the earth to the earth again.

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Big Sister, hair heaped like a fresh grave,
Turns in my arms as my arms turn,
Her fingers cool tubers against my skin
As we slide slide to the music, humming
An old tune, knee touching knee,
Step-two-three, step-two-three
Under a hard hatful of leaves,
The grass with its one good limb holding
The beat, a hint of impending form.
It gathers, it reaches back, it is caught up.

Charles Wright

CHINA

China, the infernal newsreel,
feverishly drying the brain,
as faces mill towards the toppling palaces,

the flying rickshaw of solitude,
waves goodbye to the uniforms.

Long past the wheatfields,
a people of eyes
sends ageless lanterns to woo the moon.

And I alone
carry the keys,

the bated knives.

Joachim Neugroschel

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ALEXANDRIA

"Order," she said,
lips like scissors,
"Order, a direct
route."

A one-way map
to the frontier.
The map ticks like a watch.
It blooms in spring,
falsely.
The bottom of the sea
is made of wire
in coils.

In the city, I look
down through the streets
a hundred feet,
pipes and tunnels
swimming everywhere.

We are going together.

Howard McCord

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KASTANIÁ

Up there, like yesterday, they shot forty.
Twenty years have gone by. Nobody's spoken their names.
You understand our life. Each year,
on a similar day, they've been finding in hiding places
a ripped canvas, two extinguished braziers, a little incense,
a basketful of grapes, a candle
with a black wick. It's been almost impossible to light it.
The wind's been blowing it out.
That's why, in the evening, the old women are sitting
in the doorways like ancient ikons,
that's why the eyes of our children have grown
large so quickly
and why our dogs pretend to look elsewhere
when policemen pass by.

Yámnis Rítsos

(Translated by Bertrand Mathieu)

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you wont have to be
afraid you know it doesnt matter
we were not
very good lovers

it is an indirect suggestion
the burgandy sun slipping under
this level prairie

and all this earth
old valleys pensive
tides of its women motions
of wounds nations enduring
servants of the grain

this one only planet
swung out in space
whirling in clouds
this soft and blue lovely light
our luminous voice
commons of the living and the dead

there will be some yesterday
when we will be stunned with joy

old emblems sacred
hearts broken in the snow

take care of yourself

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it is the eleventh
hour the new born
wear purple we don't know how
to protect what is not
ours I learned from the nuns
a conjunction will rivet
a hovel and a diamond and now
a polka dot tie crosses the street
important values leverage
and there are whispers
invidious impulses voices
whispering in snowfall whispers
destroying the house of the beetle
the claw of the rat
I want to go away
I want to pick up the telephone
a tormented swan an eye

john knoepfle

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IN THIS BODY

In this body at last, I supposed myself
thinking of tears, or of teeth that would fall,
in Blake's terms of leaves and of the autumn.
And in my terms the weight of the earth
and of the light interpenetrating, a pentacle:
the fall eventually to the knees, surrounded
by the young and their cries upward
that are also yours and my own
into the dense silver light of the maple.

PASSING MIDNIGHT

Across the street a woman growls in complaint,
stands bowed by the fence, her glasses somewhere
lie broken on the walk, her friend who broke them
threatens her further. Her legs are set apart.
We've passed midnight now. She bends forward,
her cry deepened, curdled with the bitter,
and the threat of release. He slaps, she sits
down. Blue lights pulsing two cop cars arrive.
Soon they have blocked the traffic. At that moment
the street quiets. Now the street sounds
rise on their own. A car's sudden braking
resembles her throat-guarded cry: a stone thrown
into the pond of feeling where we are the echoes,
where we lie in the ripples moving outward to silence.

William Hunt

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DAUGHTERS

What words for a daughter
in a time of diffidence?
My loins can give you nothing
now. My mother is loitering
in your crazy walk, your bumptious sorrows,
your chameleon and careering beauty.
Ask me if I fear my blood spilled
in childbirth or at the moon's
twisting: no one deserves your arms
or your blood or your legs clasp.
Death and life—ask me—
roost in the nests of your flesh.
My gift is that I want
nothing from you for me:
very well then, for you,
make a pet of time, own it,
blot
up all loss: make what-is
dry and clear when it is near
you: avoid fear, be winged;
embrace fear, crawl: my pride
rots as bridges do where rivers
weave mud meadows after floods.
Abstain from grief or grieve
when storks rise from reeds
as you wish. Let absurdity
shape your eyes, your face.
I love you. Live.

Harold Brodkey

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Mark Shechner

PHILIP ROTH

I knew something about Philip Roth before 1967. Since I had once lived in Newark I had read *Goodbye Columbus* and, the Jersey Jewish world being a small one, had an aunt who claimed to know the real Brenda Patimkin but wasn't about to tell. And I knew from the reviews that Roth had published two novels subsequent to the *Columbus* stories and that they were indifferently received. I knew that they were long and not about Newark and I did not read them. I first looked into "Whacking Off," a *Partisan Review* piece which some of my graduate student colleagues were passing about, just as some twenty years before their grammar school counterparts had passed around *The Amboy Dukes*. That was unique, for in our time and in that place, Berkeley, 1967, communities of knowledge did not as a rule form around fiction: we communed, when we had to, over *Zap Comics*, zap politics, literary criticism, or Country Joe and the Fish.

Our motives in recommending Roth to each other were clear enough: spontaneous fraternities that form around texts are essentially confessional communities. If none of us bore all of Portnoy's anxieties or identified with each fear and every confidence, we all understood in our own lives some portion of his complaint. Each of us had his oral or anal or phallic secret that itched to be revealed. As outwardly sedate and upwardly-mobile graduate students, we longed to be known to each other, behind our backs, as private sinners. And the serial publication of *Portnoy*, as it rolled on through "The Jewish Blues" and

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"Civilization and its Discontents" (in *New American Review),* assured us that Roth had secrets enough for all of us.

Since then, however, two things have complicated, without necessarily diminishing, my enthusiasm for Roth's writing. The first has been the discovery that my loyalty to *Portnoy* as a version of truth and my conviction that Roth has talent have not been widely shared, certainly not among Jews. The second source of complication is Roth's own work subsequent to *Portnoy.* While his voluminous writing of late has kept his talent on full, hilarious display, it has failed somehow to satisfy my own, somewhat unformed, expectations. The first matter, the opposition of *the* Jews, is of course no barrier to admiration. In the conflict between Roth and the numerous voices of Jewish disapproval, a conflict which goes back to 1959 and the publication of *Goodbye Columbus,* Roth is right and his critics wrong. For their quarrel with him is not properly over literature or any aspects thereof but over culture, and institutional Jewry in America these days has a decidedly rigid, defensive notion of culture. That notion, I might add, may be a historical necessity and a condition of survival, but the Bar Lev lines of the heart do interfere with the reading of fiction. The second matter is that of Roth's talent and the uses to which he has put it which for me is a more serious matter. It too, though, points us away from literature and toward, in this instance, psychology. Everything about Roth's recent writing suggests the need for a psychological inquiry. *Portnoy's Complaint* itself calls to mind that little-known first book by Sigmund Freud: *Studies in Hysteria.* But these two faces of Roth-in-the-world, the Jew and the writer *cum* psychological man, are the two sides of his writer's identity. Roth the novelist and culture critic is also Roth the son. Observe the abundant filial torments of Alex Portnoy. Observe too Bruno Bettelheim's psychoanalysis of him in *Midstream,* with its peevish diagnosis of Alex's neurotic conflicts. Alex, after a mere six hours on the couch, is dismissed by his analyst, Spielvogel, aka Bettelheim, as a three-way loser. He is a bad patient, a bad Jew, and a bad boy. As therapy, Bettelheim's diagnostic putdown of Alex may look like a novelty but as criticism it is a cliche, just another sad complaint about what the critics mistakenly call Roth's "self-hatred."

The same line of argument has been taken up by Irving Howe in his "Philip Roth Reconsidered" in the December 1972 *Commentary.* Howe complains there of Roth's personal and ideological assertiveness, of his stance of adolescent superiority to suburban Jewish life, of

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his nagging habit of "scoring points" instead of striving for imaginative plentitude, of his failure to render a "full and precise" portrait of his Jewish victims, and of his essential joylessness. This failure, Howe observes, is a failure of culture. Roth's stories and novels fall short of something like Tolstoyan amplitude because "they come out of a thin personal culture." Roth, we are told, has uprooted himself from "the mainstream of American culture, in its great sweep of democratic idealism and romanticism." (How foreign such phrases sound in the Republican pages of *Commentary* these days.) Howe is not wholly wrong. Roth's anger is a crucial property of his art and his books bring laughter without bringing cheer. His failure of magnanimity is considerable and his ample wit sports a chilling, mechanical edge. And a book like *The Great American Novel,* which draws its humor from an assemblage of freaks, cripples, dwarfs, stage Jews, and stagier *goyim,* will not improve his reputation for compassion. Nor will the book's loose collection of bits and routines earn him any points toward what Howe has called with Arnoldian sobriety, "compositional rigor and moral seriousness." But for all that, Howe's lecture on Roth's cultural impoverishment is arch and gratuitous. And certainly, if it was intended as salutory advice, it is self-defeating, for telling a Jew that he lacks culture is no way to get him to pay attention.

Roth's image of himself as perennial Jewish son would seem to be at the core of his identity. It certainly has everything to do with his attachment to Kafka, another Jewish son with a painful and debilitating relationship to fatherhood (see " 'I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fasting'; or, Looking at Kafka," *American Review).* "Marrying is barred to me," confesses this Kafka to his father, "because it is your domain." But the sons we discover in Roth's fiction differ from Kafka's in this crucial respect: it is not the father's power that condemns them to impotence and bachelorhood; it is his weakness. The secret of the terror behind Roth's fiction is the realization that the father is impotent. In fact, Roth himself may be braced and encouraged by the opposition of the Rabbis, for the father's enmity is preferable to his adoration. "Others," he confesses in his Kafka essay, "are crushed by paternal criticism—I find myself oppressed by his high opinion of me!" There is no escape from the ineffectual father, for the son's oedipal guilt is renewed daily by the father's failures. "Make my father a father," cries Lucy Nelson (*When She Was Good),* and she, a daughter, broadcasts this appeal on behalf of all the Roth sons, before and after.

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Roth rewrites the opening sentence of *The Metamorphosis* this way: "As Franz Kafka awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a father, a writer, and a Jew." This Kafka is no gigantic insect with three pairs of legs quivering helplessly before his eyes but a man with three afflictions: Jewishness, talent, and fatherhood, the last, the greatest affliction of all. Imagine a Kafka, or a Roth, trying to love that brilliant issue of his loins known as a son. "Keep him away from me," screams a young, imaginary Roth in the Kafka piece. Jake Portnoy's bowels answer in frozen rage from the pages of an earlier book. Paternity is a legal fiction in Roth's books where sons and fathers turn out to be brothers under the skin, locked into generations by an unfortunate biological fate. What is Isaac to do when Abraham drops the knife and gets down on the chopping block with him? That is Roth's real dilemma. And that is why manhood in his books never gets farther than a dream of center field. The son's chief concern is not to escape his father's wrath but to short-circuit his sentimentality; the thing he doesn't want to do is make his father cry.

With fatherhood in doubt, all other relationships are in trouble. Relationships, in Roth's world, are painful experiments whose failures may be preferable to their shame-ridden successes. Men and women are natural enemies who do horrible things when they mistakenly get together, for marrying is surely as barred to Roth's sons as ever it was to Kafka's. It is a good thing for Aunt Rhoda ("Looking at Kafka") that Dr. Kafka's problem is revealed to her *before* the marriage at that Atlantic City Hotel, for marriage is a fate worse than lifelong loneliness. Love is a front for aggression; sex is an occasion for failure; childhood is tragedy; adulthood farce. The family, according to Roth, doesn't pass on culture; it transmits symptoms. In such a world, to be a child is excruciating; to be a parent is unimaginable.

If Roth's books read like case histories, so does the profile of his entire career. It begins with an orderly and sedate fiction about straight-laced heroes who fail at some relationship or vital task and manifest their disappointment in "symptoms," spontaneous outbreaks of anger, unreason, or vertigo. Mrs. Portnoy calls them "conniption fits." The early books, the *Goodbye Columbus* stories, *Letting Go,* and *When She Was Good,* with their repressed and driven characters, constitute a fiction of failed renunciation. Their heroes are all characters who repress desires which, as we might expect, refuse to go

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away and keep returning in the form of compulsive and irrational behavior. In *Letting Go,* the mutual renunciation of Gabe Wallach and Libby Herz (based on their mutual reading of *A Portrait of a Lady)* is prelude to six hundred pages of indecision (his), neurasthenia (hers), confusion, and sudden, irrational tantrums (theirs). In *When She Was Good,* the praise accorded to Willard Nelson in the very opening sentence tells us exactly what is wrong with him. "Not to be rich, not to be famous, not to be mighty, not even to be happy, but to be civilized —that was the dream of his life." A man who has given up that much might prosper in a novel of manners, but when Jamesian pretensions surface in a novel by Roth, things go haywire. When Roth hears the word *civilization,* he reaches for his discontents. And in fact, Lucy Nelson, who has learned from Grandpa Willard the virtues of small-town character armor, reaps its rewards when faced with the demands of pregnancy and abandonment. Her studied reaction-formations are revealed to be useless and she goes berserk with terror and righteousness.

Portnoy's Complaint advertises itself as Roth's psychic breakthrough, the book in which the Yid grapples with repression and lays claim to his Id. An oppressive childhood is dragged into the light; a wild sexual fantasy life makes its debut seemingly undistorted by style or euphemism; the Jewish mother in all her ambiguous effulgence replaces the father at stage center; her son's masturbation is magnificently confessed and celebrated; food is revealed to be an agent of both repression and liberation, and eating turns out to have something to do with love and sex. The book ends with nothing less than the primal scream, all ninety-six *a*'s and four *h*'s of it, after which Dr. Spielvogel delivers, and blows, the punch line. This book appears to deliver all the right confessions demanded of an analysis: confessions of undue bondage to the past, of secret humiliations and secret rages, of crimes against the family, of failures of the body and overcompensations of the will.

Post *Portnoy* we have been treated to the breakthrough books and stories: "On the Air" *(New American Review),* a savage and barely controlled saga of one day in the life of Milton Lippmann, talent scout; *Our Gang,* the book of pure malice; *The Breast,* an experiment in controlled regression with an old-fashioned stoical message; " 'I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fasting'; or "Looking at Kafka," a lecture turned fantasy of Franz Kafka's possible adventures in Newark; *The Great American Novel,* a four-hundred-page free association

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around the theme of baseball, and *My Life as a Man,* a novel about marriage in the fifties. Up until the last book, which appears to return to older modes of writing, Roth's progress throughout this period seemed to bear an identifiable form: the early books, pre-*Portnoy,* were the documents of repression, the later writings, witnesses to the return of the repressed. Where Roth used to give us stoical characters who bore their misfortunes with the sullen nobility of the truly civilized until overtaken by sudden, irrational outbursts, he more recently has turned to showing us literary surfaces that look like primary process thought. Where repression was we now have rage; in lieu of symptoms we now get style.

Upon its appearance, *Portnoy's Complaint* was the most spectacular attempt at Freudian fiction in recent American literature, not only because of the apparent boldness of its confessions, but because of Spielvogel's summary diagnosis, which challenged us with its crisp Germanic expertise. And despite the imposing clinical and theoretical apparatus of the latest book, *My Life as a Man,* the former, I think, is more successful as psychological fiction, perhaps because Alex manages to achieve with wit what Peter Tarnopol and Spielvogel (who is his analyst also) do with theory. Alex, to be sure, knows his theory also: he annotates his complaint with appropriate references to *The Standard Edition,* though he modestly claims to be reading only *The Collected Papers.* We know that he has read "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life," and that he practices it, and that he is familiar with *Civilization and Its Discontents,* as both text and dilemma. His furtive sexuality is supposed to mediate the demands of a clamorous, infantile id and a vigilant, righteous superego, and fails. Thus, according to Spielvogel: "Acts of exhibitionism, voyeurism, fetishism, autoeroticism and oral coitus are plentiful; as a consequence of the patient's 'morality,' however, neither fantasy nor act issues in genuine sexual gratification, but rather in overriding feelings of shame and the dread of retribution, particularly in the form of castration." That is a cogent and inclusive sentence and, in fact, the complaint (here meaning malady, not *geschrei),* stripped of its cultural paraphernalia and defensive wit, does make sense as a strategy for negotiating deep-psychic conflict. Moreover, believes Spielvogel, "many of the symptoms can be traced to the bonds obtaining in the mother-child relationship." The doctor has saved us some research here, though his

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categories, like most diagnostic labels, are textbookish and preemptive; they substitute the mannerisms of analysis for explanation, and if the analytic sections of *My Life as a Man* are any indication of what Spielvogel sounds like when he is under a full head of steam, we, and Alex Portnoy, should be more appreciative of his enigmatic silences in the earlier book. Still, he has the right idea: the fictional imitation of confession *is* confession and we as readers have some duty to make sense of what we are being so desperately told.

To set the stage for an analysis of our own we have to set the table, for *Portnoy's Complaint* is an exposé, no, a vaudeville, of the Jewish stomach. Food is to Jewish comedy and Jewish neurosis what drink is to Irish, though only Roth so far has taken the full anthropological plunge into the ethnology of the Jewish digestive tract. Roth's Jews are not a *people*, a *culture*, *nation*, *tradition*, or any other noun of rabbinical piety. They are a *tribe*, which, after its own primitive fashion, observes arbitrary taboos and performs strange sundown rituals that look like obsessional symptoms. Roth's particular neurotic style of observing the world has this virtue: a lucid and unsentimental eye for styles of irrational behavior, his own included. As he sees it, the kosher laws are as primitive and irrational as any Australian fetish or Papuan cult of cargo, and the dietary antagonism of milk and meat in the Jewish diet is something, not out of Leviticus, but out of Róheim.

Portnoy's morality, not to mention his immorality, begins at the table. Here is *The Law* according to that Moses of Manhattan, the Assistant Commissioner of Human Opportunity for the City of New York. "Let the *goyim* sink *their* teeth into whatever lowly creature crawls and grunts across the face of the dirty earth, we will not contaminate our humanity thus." Thus spake Portnoy of the superego. Now let's hear a word from Portnoy of the id. "At least let me eat your pussy." It is in that spectrum of possibilities between phobic avoidance and insane lapping that the minute moral discriminations of Jewish life are made. For us, the word *moral* derives etymologically from the word *oral.*

When a sin is committed in the Portnoy home it is more likely to involve gluttony than lechery, though in the muddled dreamwork of a complicated and unreliable memory, primal crimes often become confused. "A terrible act has been committed, and it has been committed by either my father or me. The wrongdoer, in other words, is one of the two members of the family who owns a penis. Okay. So far so good.

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Now: did he fuck between those luscious legs the gentile cashier from the office, or have I eaten my sister's chocolate pudding?" This confusion never does get resolved. In the infantile moral system of this household, shared by parents and children alike, pudding and pussy may be equally taboo and proscribed with equal ferocity. Food, of course, is the first medium of love and authority for all of us, and where it retains its primal power, as it does for the Portnoys, young sinners may be heard to confess: "I'm eight years old and chocolate pudding happens to get me hot." It is understandable then that the table is the battlefield on which Alex's bid for manhood is fought and lost. The toilet and the bed are also put to military uses but they are later and secondary weapons and by the time Alex has understood their potential, the war is over. Rearguard actions still rage, however, and Alex's prime weapons are all the tricks in his stubborn oral trade: "having a mouth on him," refusing to eat, eating *chazerai* (or lobster or pussy), feeding his parents in turn, or, and herein shines forth his desperate genius, fucking his family's dinner. All strategies naturally fail since the field of battle has been chosen in advance and it favors whoever has got the ammunition.

Hunger striking fails as dismally for Portnoy as it does for Kafka's hunger artist. "I always wanted you to admire my fasting," confesses the dying hunger artist to a bored overseer. Portnoy, a tougher sort, would have survived such boredom, but in a household in which food is mistaken for love, hunger artistry is merely being a bad eater and earns not disinterest but a brandished breadknife and a perverse maternal appeal to a son's future manhood: which does he want to be, weak or strong, a man or a mouse?

The politics of food and guilt at the Jewish table have given rise to a unique taboo: *chazerai. Chazerai* is not necessarily unkosher food, unblessed or formally proscribed by the laws; neither the hot dog nor the cupcake is mentioned by name in Leviticus. But *chazerai,* while not unkosher de jure is certainly so de facto. It is cheap, processed, mass-produced snack food, gotten outside the home, behind one's mother's back. Its true purpose, as every Jewish mother knows, is to ruin her son's appetite for dinner—her dinner. Thus the eating of snacks after school is a betrayal, and the boy who stops for a burger and fries at fourteen will, at thirty, be stopping after work for a *shikse,* thus ruining his appetite.

For the son, naturally, *chazerai* symbolizes freedom, sexual free-

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dom. For example, here is Alex's own dietary analysis of the difference between himself and Smolka, that same Smolka who gets blown by Bubbles Girardi after Alex, crestfallen, leaves her house having come in his own eye while bringing *himself* off. "He lives on Hostess cupcakes and his own wits. I get a hot lunch and all the inhibitions thereof." But for ultimate aphrodisiacal virtue there is the lobster, a terror beyond *chazerai,* an unambiguous threat to sanity and life. Sophie Portnoy's historic bout with lobster, paralysis, and an Irish insurance salesman is textbook hysteria. "See how I'm holding my fingers" she instructs her son, a neophyte in primitive religious phenomena, "I was throwing up so hard, they got stiff just like this, like I was paralyzed. . . ."

Sophie's symptoms are prophecies for her son. Within an hour of eating a lobster with brother-in-law Morty at Sheepshead Bay, Alex has his cock out on the 107 bus, "aimed at a *shikse.*" It is to protect him from such madness that a mother must keep up her dietary vigilance. Naturally this education in taboo-by-diet falls to the mother, for she understands better than anyone how food, love, power and possession are arranged.

Is it any wonder then that this same Sophie invites Jake's new cashier from the office for a nice, home-cooked Jewish meal? Hardly, for once Anne McCaffrey has dined with the Portnoys she's hooked, and not on Jake but on his wonderful *haimische* family. "This is your real Jewish chopped liver, Anne. Have you ever had real Jewish chopped liver before?" So much for that affair, for if lobster is the Spanish fly of the Jews, real chopped liver is their saltpeter, the all-inhibiting cold hors d'oeuvre of the constipated husband. Could Jake be slipping it to that new cashier on the side? Not after that meal. For this is a totem feast and that is *his liver* they're passing around.

So it is not just a happy conjunction of horniness and opportunity that sets Alex to banging that fresh liver behind the billboard *on his way to a bar mitzvah lesson.* It is another symbol of Alex's private *Kulturkampf,* with the liver falling victim to his relentless, educated cock. What price such victory? To have your mother serve up the conquest two hours later, healthy as milk, dry as matzo, warm and safe as your own Jewish childhood. In other words, defeat. (In the "Salad Days" section of *My Life as a Man,* Roth tries to carry this oral logic over into the plant kingdom by having Sharon Shatsky entertain Nathan Zuckerman with a floor show in which she applies to herself a

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dildo that happens to be a zucchini. Though funny in its own way, the scene lacks resonance; the Jews have never been hung up on vegetables.)

If Alex is telling the truth, and he must be unless this is the most opaque lie or deceptive screen memory known to psychoanalysis, his mother's purposes are plain and sinister. She wants nothing less than the annexation of her son, the full possession of and control over his manhood, and she'll have it by stalling his growth at a level of oral dependence. That is why mealtime is the likeliest occasion for Alex to make that libidinal leap to the toilet, for as long as he dines at home, his mouth belongs to mama. When his manhood droops, he seeks refuge in the sure successes of boyhood love, determined to win praise at least as a good eater. Similarly, in *My Life as a Man,* it is appropriate that Nathan Zuckerman tries to face down his "boyish" disgust and demonstrate to Lydia Ketterer and himself that he is a good man and a proper lover by eating her. The ability to eat anything is one of the many false definitions of manhood that Roth's heroes try on for size.

That food and love should be so consistently mistaken for each other is no mystery. The connection between them is built into our mammalian heritage, and the job of learning the difference is an ordinary childhood task that we all perform more or less badly. The terms of that task are named by Roth in two of his titles, *The Breast* and *Letting Go,* and they stand for the primal situations out of which his characters must negotiate a way of life. For these characters, letting go is a theme of desperate urgency, for entrapment, in the form either of captivity or self-repression, is their most abiding condition. Alex Portnoy's final scream is a gesture of letting go that is native to the Roth novel. At the moment of release, the bonds of repression are torn loose allowing repressed anger to surge peremptorily to the surface. Thus the tantrum is serious business and sooner or later in these books one is bound to be thrown. In *My Life,* Peter Tarnopol's tantrum is a moment of sexual truth: it finds him donning his wife's panties and bra in order to show her, he later explains, that "I wear the panties in this family." In *Portnoy,* it constitutes Alex's final statement, the last desperate oral demand before Spielvogel interrupts to commence the analysis.

Holding on and letting go are terrors because they first were wishes and it is in the struggle between those wishes that Alex is paralyzed, not in that starchy tango of id and superego so scrupulously

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defined by the hopelessly orthodox Spielvogel. That conflict, nurtured by a Jewish family that doesn't know when to call parenthood quits, can ramify into the alimentary insanity of Alex Portnoy's life. Every odd libidinal enterprise of his is an attempt to satisfy those two wishes and to be a man and a baby at the same time.

Every character of Roth's seems to be stuck with this obligation, to satisfy deep-seated but contrary needs at once: to grow up *and* to regress; to let go *and* to hold on; to be autonomous *and* dependent. Totalists that they are, they are unable to find and occupy a human middle ground on which self-reliance need not be isolation or love entrapment. Thus Alex Portnoy steers clear of love by laying sexual traps for himself, insuring that his experiments in love will always end in defeat. His episodes of sexual boredom and his bouts with impotence are strategically timed. It is Peter Tarnopol who, seemingly on Alex's behalf, tries to break out of the circle of sexual isolation by getting married and manages, not unpredictably, to marry a woman he fears and despises. To be sure, Maureen Johnson is a fearsome woman, but that is why Peter wants her. He marries her *in order to destroy her,* and while any woman will do for that, it is a fine point of conscience that she should seem to deserve what she eventually gets.

This same dilemma underlies that curious little book, *The Breast,* which Roth wrote some time between *Portnoy* and *My Life* and which reads like a companion piece to both. In fact, if speculation about the book's origins is of any value, it is my guess that it is an addendum to *Portnoy's Complaint* and is perhaps one of those dreams that Alex must have produced in analysis but somehow failed to report to us. For its hero, David Alan Kepesh, reads like a primary process version of Alex, his repressed infant perhaps, his latent content. Kepesh appears to be the disguised fulfillment of Alex's most repressed wish which we may now guess is to undo his ill-fated sonhood altogether in favor of a generational merger, to become, not just an infant, but his own mother. To be more explicit, that is, more clinical, if this is a dream and if we know the dreamer, as I think we do, then we can say in our cold and diagnostic way that he has dreamed of becoming his own mother by way of a psychic retreat to that period of his own infancy when the sensory focus was too primitive and diffuse for him to know who was who. The advantages to such merger are obvious: it is a way of holding on and letting go at the same time, allowing you to *have* your mother without *having to deal* with her. (And the breast, for what this may be worth, confounds the kosher laws by being *both milchig and fleis-*

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chig.) In such a dream of primal merger, the dreamer is at last on his own, self-contained, androgynous, and pleasantly autoerotic, and can indulge himself forever at the sacred fount of life without two sets of dishes. But since this dream by Alex is also a story by Roth the fulfillment of this wish is bound to exact a price. It turns out that the dream of merger is also the dream of regression and the fairy tale of sexual self-sufficiency can turn into the nightmare of total helplessness. Thus Alex Portnoy's dream of independence and autonomy becomes David Kepesh's nightmare of isolation and entrapment.

Such a situation is not propitious for fiction; Kepesh's possibilities are too limited. He can only lie there and suffer and, in the end, grow tiresome. That is the condition of the infant after all; its demands are few, simple, boring, and endless, and since it can't act out its frustrated desires, it learns instead to moralize, to develop a superego and become wise. Kepesh's condition is in fact terrifying and yet the tone of *The Breast* seems askew because Kepesh refuses to be anything but sensible. Accordingly, while *Portnoy's Complaint* is protest fiction and a brief in behalf of letting go, *The Breast* is a conservative moral fable about the virtues of holding on. It hands us the dilemma of civilization and its discontents at the most primitive infantile level and comes out foursquare for repression. Alex, with his temper, is a tiger of wrath; Kepesh, with his Shakespeare and his Rilke, is a horse of instruction. But he may have no choice; all he can do is want, and want, and want, and learn how to behave when he doesn't get. Self-repression and parental control are stultifying annoyances for the likes of Alex Portnoy, but they are cruel necessities in the moral life of an infant, or a breast. That may be why *The Breast* is so unsettling a book, for to us, Kepesh's "mature" prescription of a daily anesthetic to reduce his polymorphous appetities reinforced by therapeutic doses of Shakespeare seems like a defeatist strategy for a meager endurance. We want a magical release from breasthood and Kepesh gives us, English majors all, the fake magic of poetry. We want the primal scream and he delivers lessons about Mr. Reality. Indeed, he is unique among the likes of Ozzie Freedman, Gabriel Wallach, Lucy Nelson, Alex Portnoy, and Peter Tarnopol; he never throws a tantrum. *The Breast* is the Rothian nightmare at its most radical and its most pedantic. Kepesh, having become his own mother or at least a part of her, thumps *her* bible; his text on renunciation and endurance may be wisdom but of a familiar Jewish kind. As breasts go he is an overachiever. Nipple and all, he is learning how to be a good boy—and an English professor.

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Or, if not a professor exactly, then a visiting lecturer and Jewish novelist like Peter Tarnopol of *My Life as a Man.* Tarnopol, for those who don't already know, is a thirty-four-year-old writer (author of the celebrated novel, *A Jewish Father),* widower, neurotic, narcissist, teacher, and patient who has squandered his talent and his manhood in a marriage that has left him frantic, suspicious, over his head in debt and guilt, and only just capable of turning the marriage into a book. That book is presumably this one, *My Life as a Man,* a novel in three parts: two stories by Tarnopol, or "useful fictions" as he calls them—"Salad Days," and "Courting Disaster (or Serious in the Fifties)"—and an autobiographical novella, "My True Story," a true confession done up ingeniously in the manner of a "true confession." That section is an exposé of the mean and desperate married life of a young writer. Due partly to the ironbound divorce laws of New York State and partly to the inexhaustible loyalty, or was it sadism, of Maureen Johnson Tarnopol, formerly Mezik, formerly Walker, the marriage had been dissolvable only in accordance with the vows themselves: by death. It had been a trumped-up affair from the start: founded upon a false pregnancy that was contrived with the aid of a urine sample Maureen had bought from a pregnant black woman for $2.25, and a phony abortion, for which a Jewish boyfriend paid through the nose. Three years into the marriage, in the heat of a daily brawl, this one over Peter's brief affair with his undergraduate student, Karen Oakes, Maureen stages a mock suicide and threatens to expose her lascivious professor-husband to the university—no, to the universe —and he in turn fires off the last bullet in his emotional arsenal, a tantrum. He tears off his clothes and dons Maureen's underclothes. Confronted by her husband in low and partial drag, Maureen confesses her original sin and, as such things go in stalled marriages, turns her confession into an instrument of coercion: "If you forgive me for the urine, I'll forgive you for your mistress." This is the sort of *quid pro quo* we used to associate with the Americans in Vietnam. Now, 1967, four years after Peter's desperate escape from marriage and a year after Maureen's death in a car crash that was possibly self-engineered, he is finally writing the novel episode by bloody episode, in the monastic isolation of the Quahsay writer's retreat in Vermont.

Like David Kepesh, Peter Tarnopol is confounded by his predicament on two grounds: he has no idea how he got into it, and is impo-

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tent to discover a way out. Thus, like *The Breast, My Life* is largely a discourse on the ambiguities of entrapment, an inquiry into just how it is that a man can find himself so firmly beyond the pleasure principle just when he had so much pleasure to anticipate. As Roth conducts it, the inquiry is not so much philosophical as diagnostic. The two styles differ in the way, say, a Bellow novel differs from a Roth novel, for where Moses Herzog and Artur Sammler tend to make global inquiries like "What is this life?" and "What is the heart of man?" the likes of Portnoy, Kepesh, and Tarnopol pour their perplexity into more local and immediate questions: "How did I get *here* when I was just *there*?" and "Why is *she* doing *that* to *me*?" In the true Freudian spirit, they assume that predicaments point to faults and that answers should be formulated in terms of blame.

Tarnopol is quick to blame the culture. He was deceived into making that vain and calamitous gesture of a marriage, he believes, by the ethos or perhaps the superego of the fifties. For, in that decade,

> Decency and Maturity, a young man's "seriousness," were at issue precisely because it was thought to be the other way around: in that the great world was so obviously a man's, it was only within marriage that an ordinary woman could hope to find equality and dignity. Indeed, we were led to believe by the defenders of womankind of our era that we were exploiting and degrading the women we *didn't* marry, rather than the ones we did.

And, as if the fifties weren't enough, there was the great tradition of literary high seriousness to contend with, a tradition epitomized for Tarnopol by an epigram from Thomas Mann that he had appended to *A Jewish Father* (and Roth had used for *Letting Go*): "All actuality is deadly earnest, and it is morality itself that, one with life, forbids us to be true to the guileless unrealism of our youth." Tarnopol is right here. The courtship of cultural superegos has always been the English major's game and Peter suffers the English major's fate—to have been done in by the tight-lipped moralism of the great Protestant tradition and by those ideas about honor, duty, and manly responsibility that can be gotten from a University of Chicago education. "To live well," saith the superego, especially one nurtured upon Dostoevsky, Conrad, Hawthorne, F. R. Leavis, and Mortimer Adler's *Syntopicon*, "is to suffer." The great dialogue of Western Man says a lot less than it should about the advantages of the pleasure principle.

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The ubiquitous Dr. Spielvogel, who is Tarnopol's analyst too, sees things differently. What Tarnopol had taken for cultural coercion, he sees as the victim's collusion, as the "acting out" of his ambivalence, narcissism, and a libidinized aggression that was initially directed toward a "phallic mother" but subsequently displaced onto a wife. Indeed, so taken is Spielvogel with this diagnosis and the insight it gives him into the creative personality that he writes it up as a paper which he publishes while Tarnopol is still under his care. Speaking in his own voice, Spielvogel sounds like this: "Since in his case a mother-child relationship was definitely established, the writer, during his early years, was able to use narcissism as a defense against anxiety engendered by separation from the mother." He goes on in this vein: "Submission seemed to be the price for love both vis-à-vis his mother and his wife. His way of avoiding a confrontation with his feelings of anger and his dependency needs toward his wife was to act out sexually with other women." At first glance, such awful clinical prose is disheartening; here, if anywhere, is interpretation by catchphrase, and Tarnopol is rightly outraged to discover himself, not only written up, but turned to jargon. But behind the wooden diagnostic prose is some ordinary sense about the place of the family in Tarnopol's emotional failures that makes his lament about the fifties and the moral deceptions of Conrad and Flaubert sound like pop sociology.

What Spielvogel sees in this marriage is not a man victimized by an era that placed a premium on self-sacrifice and moral accountability but a tactical arrangement between two people who were out to enjoy some serious punishment. Behind his jargon is the suggestion that the marriage had its purposes for Tarnopol and that Maureen's duplicity not only posed a threat to him but opened up some opportunities as well. On Maureen's part, the signs of wanting something more than an Eddie Fisher-Debbie Reynolds version of "true love" are there from the start: she courts punishment with all the enthusiasm of a journeyman welterweight who is out to take a convincing dive. Even before the marriage, when she attacks Peter with her purse and he threatens, in his harmless way, "Clip me with that purse, Maureen, and I'll kill you," she responds, "Do it! Kill me! Some man's going to—why not a 'civilized' one like you!"

Of course it is not really possible to disentangle complicated motives at this level; it is only worth pointing out that Maureen's invitation to Peter to kill her is deeply felt on her part and Peter, in marrying

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her, picks up that strand in their relationship along with a good many others. Yes, guilt, submission, intimidation, sudden moral collapse, all those motives are obvious and correctly identified, and yet the fact remains that such marriages are only possible for a special class of men—those who don't like women. Maureen, to hear her tell it, had a talent for finding such men: Mezik, the alcoholic bartender in Rochester who made her blow his buddy while he watched, and Walker, the homosexual in Cambridge who promised to give up boys after the marriage and broke the promise. Tarnopol is more at home in such company than he imagines. What all three have in common is a dislike for women and a penchant for discovering in Maureen the right sort of woman—someone for whom their prearranged misogyny can seem like a just and natural hatred. Indeed, the circumstances of her death are ambiguous enough to suggest that it is Walker at last who kills her. He, at any rate, was driving, though, as so often is the case in mutual destruction pacts, he may have survived the sacrifice more or less accidentally.

The news of Maureen's death has hardly arrived when Peter finds himself contemplating his newest problem, girlfriend Susan McCall, who, until then, had merely been a pleasant burden: a helpless, mildly neurotic, leggy heiress who is incapable of an orgasm but cooks a marvelous *blanquette de veau* and expertly knows just how much kirsch to put on the fruit. In short, she is totally unsuited for life with an aspiring young hunger artist. Thus it is that *My Life* concludes with Peter, in tears from just having spoken to his father on the phone, turning to contemplate the newest threat to his freedom.

> I turned to Susan, still sitting there huddled up on her coat looking, to my abasemant, as helpless as the day I had found her. Sitting there *waiting*. Oh, my God, I thought—now you. You being you! And *me*! This me who is me being me and none other!

No, this one is off to Quahsay and sexual quarantine, to a life of hard work, regular hours, calisthenics, a breakfast of hot cereal, and a simple boy's lunch. He is out to relive, if possible, the easy ascetic triumphs of those salad days when to finish your homework and clean your plate were the only evidence you needed that you were living the good life.

My Life as a Man is Roth's best sustained piece of writing since

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Portnoy's Complaint and perhaps, in all, his best book. Its prose is strong and mean and finely attuned to the gestures of real speech, especially the asperities of a lousy marriage and the aggressive banalities of the daily hustle. Roth listens to the language around him better than any writer in America today, and when he is listening well his prose is gratefully free from his characteristic mannerisms: those of precocious insight and those of high purpose. From the beginning he has had difficulty bringing his talent into working alignment with his material, a difficulty that comes in part from the conflicting claims of his two muses: Henry James and Henny Youngman. Books like *Letting Go* and *When She Was Good,* novels of high seriousness, were burdened by what now looks like an inauthentic sobriety of voice, while the exercises in pure Youngman: *Our Gang* and *The Great American Novel,* have tended to give in to their effects, to suffer from comic overkill. Such stylistic meandering reflects the instability of Roth's purposes. We see here a career based on splitting and isolation: a periodic identification with one of these fathers and a fierce struggle against contamination by the other. *My Life as Man*'s flaws are characteristic: the periodic flat spots in which the writer seems to have lost interest, those hysterical dialogues that are a bit too frantic for a bit too long, and the open seams that show us how, and sometimes how awkwardly, the novel was assembled. And yet here, in a rare show of intrapsychic cooperation, Roth's comedy has bent itself to the expression of real pain, and his guilt and his irony have found common expression in the same medium. The resulting style sounds, as Peter Tarnopol observes, like a mixture of Dostoevsky and soap opera, but the novel has always been the sentimental genre, and *My Life* is, at worst, mainline domestic pathos with only some of the sex roles reversed. Roth has been successful here to the extent that the book's flaws feel like inevitable aspects of its texture. *My Life* is a hard story to tell: it *should* double back on itself a bit, feature a false start or two, or protest more than makes us comfortable—it should, for humility's sake, be told a bit clumsily.

Yet unlike *Our Gang* and *The Great American Novel,* whose awkwardness betrays the haste of their composition, the patchwork construction of this book feels like the result of hard work with intractable materials. My guess is that Roth has struggled long with this book and that its successes have not been easily achieved. In fact, it shows signs of having been in the works at least since 1967, which, computed in

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Roth time, is more than seven years ago. For not only did *Portnoy* begin to appear in 1967 but *When She was Good* was also published in that year, a book that seems so ancient now that it might as well be a Sumerian tablet covered with some cuneiform scrawl. *My Life,* I think, makes some sense of that anomalous book at last, for an examination of the two books together strongly argues that both are attempts to manage and articulate the same situation, and that the first book's failure to contain this life in its fictions led Roth to reformulate his obsession in another, more direct, form. This choice has nothing to do with the preferability of "fact" to "fiction" since that is a meaningless distinction for any novelist. A writer soon discovers that he cannot really tell the truth, that is, be scrupulously faithful to actual events, and that he also cannot really lie: he can only choose a style of representation and trust it to be suitable to his psychological needs and capable of the right literary effects. While there is no measuring the psychic gains of Roth's representation of personal catastrophe as "true confession" in *My Life as a Man,* the literary gains are clearly substantial, for the book engages his talent fully, at its most frantic, its most ironic, and its most subtle.

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Frank Kermode

HAWTHORNE'S MODERNITY

Much has been written, of late, about seventeenth-century typology. Strictly speaking, a type is distinguished from a symbol or allegory in that it is constituted by an historical event or person (as Christ makes Jonah the type of his resurrection, and St. Paul the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites a type of baptism). A type can therefore be identified only when fulfilled by its antitype, a later event in a providentially structured history; the Old Covenant is a type of the New. The main field of operation is the Old Testament. Christian typology begins in Paul and the Gospels; Mark is sometimes regarded as minutely typological in his treatment of the narrative. Even Milton, devotee of the "single sense" of scripture, allowed that this sense might be "a compound of the historical and typical."

Types are essentially what Auerbach has in mind when he speaks of *figurae,* events or persons that are themselves, but may presage others. Their purpose, to put it too simply, is to accommodate the events and persons of a superseded order of time to a new one. A writer conscious of standing on a watershed between past and present might well be interested in typology, though his use of the word "type" might not have the exactness required by scholars, and he might let it be contaminated by other devices for accommodating an old veiled sense to a new order of time. Hawthorne, who uses the word frequently, certainly uses it loosely, and on occasion allows it to run into the senses of others, such as "allegory" and "emblem."

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In any case, Americans had already loosened up the concept — Jonathan Edwards, a student of Locke and Newton, extended it to natural phenomena, and influenced the Transcendentalism of Emerson, who influenced Hawthorne. For Emerson the agency by which the types were recognized was not theological; it was the imagination — "a second sight," looking through facts, and using them as types or words for thoughts which they signify. Thus types manifest themselves in nature no longer with the exact and clear fulfillment demanded by the ancestors but as the expression in natural form of something belonging to a higher realm. Another sentence of Emerson's is characteristic not only in the application of the word 'type', but also in that of the word "influence:" "Throw a stone into the stream, and the *circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all* influence."

Hawthorne, though he knew about Mather's stricter typology, was capable of calling the steam-engine "the type of all that go ahead," which has an Emersonian fluidity of designation. He was thus not alone in seeing the past in the light not of inherited certainties, but rather of cultivated uncertainties, the light of the imagination. Hawthorne was not concerned with the novelist's ordinary devices of verisimilar representation, which are an obeisance to a principle of reality incompatible with his purposes. As he says in the Preface to the *House of the Seven Gables,* he wrote Romances intended "to connect a bygone age with the very present that is flitting away from us, with the legend that is "prolonging itself" . . . down into our own broad daylight,' its significance rendered by that daylight dubious and obscure, suggestive and not positive.

In "My Kinsman Major Molineux" he had spoken of "the moon creating, like the imaginative power, a beautiful strangeness in familiar objects," a Coleridgean or Emersonian figure appropriate to the intellectual freedom he must exercise to see the shadow of the past — history, tradition and legend — as it lies on the critical present. It shares with, and imparts, a tremulous character to the passing moment, to the uncertainties of the present as it seeks the future in the past. Hawthorne has, in extraordinary degree, the "modernist" sense of a future whose relation to the past is far more than ever before ambiguous; which makes his own moment typical of a transition from one structure of society, and one system of belief and knowledge, to another, in which the past and its types must be transformed.

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For the word itself implies an event to be fulfilled in the future, and that future no one could now predict. Consequently its current senses imposed themselves in very curious ways on the old ones. Etymologically "type" derives from the Greek *tuptein,* to incise or inscribe; for centuries it was believed that God had provided two books, the Bible and Nature, and that Nature too was inscribed with divine hints — the plants bore each a sign indicating its use, just as history revealed God's will to men. Before those times were effectively over the characters of printing had come to be called types; each was inscribed with the letter which was its function. And since the type is the fount of innumerable identical letters, the word has also the sense of the central or original members of its class.

Types were engraved with an instrument called a puncheon ("an instrument driven to make a hole or impression," says Johnson's *Dictionary)* and one tapped it with a mallet or maul. These tools provide the family names used by Hawthorne in *The House of the Seven Gables,* Pyncheon and Maule. So Hawthorne was, for his purposes, punning discreetly on the printing sense of "type."

The earliest photographers called their plates "types," partly no doubt because they were in a sense engraved by light, partly because they were the source of many identical examples. Daguerre's method, invented in 1839, does not allow of replication, but he called his device the Daguerrotype; it was a silver plate sensitised by iodine, exposed to light, and developed by exposure to mercury. Daguerrotypes enjoyed a great vogue in the Forties; one made of Hawthorne in 1848 survives. They were valued for their delicacy, but also for their accuracy; they eliminated the style and flattery of the portrait painter, on the fallibility of whom Hawthorne commented, while sitting for his own portrait in May, 1850: "there is no such thing as a true portrait; they are all delusions and I never saw any two alike." This was written three months after he finished *The Scarlet Letter,* and shortly before he began *The House of the Seven Gables.* The daguerrotype also made unnecessary that sequence of operations by which a portrait is made reproducible in the form of an engraving, every workman in the chain adding his own distortions. Hawthorne was to complain, in *The Marble Faun,* of the loss entailed in the sculptor's use of assistants who worked on the marble, and to argue for the force and accuracy of the hasty sketch as against the finished work.

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Hawthorne, like everyone else of any note, knew Agassiz, the geologist and biologist, who shortly became an important Harvard Professor and the best known (if not the best) of American paleontologists. He followed Cuvier in declaring that no evidence existed to indicate that one animal could develop from another, or to show that there was any genetic connection between the species of successive strata. "Species," he said, "do not pass insensibly one into another, but . . . appear and disappear unexpectedly, without direct relation to their precursors." The form of each species he calls the *type,* explaining in the preface to his textbook that this was common parlance.

Agassiz, though a valued correspondent of Darwin, not surprisingly rejected *The Origin of Species;* in a posthumous paper he finally reasserted the truth of all species to their type, and denied analogies from embryology, arguing that the metamorphoses of the foetus "have never been known to lead to any transition" of one species into another." The metamorphoses of the embryo simply culminate in its compliance with its type.

With Agassiz departed the last hope of a science which could regard natural history as a phenomenal representation of the operations of divine providence; which thought of itself as "interpreting a system which is not ours," a system which is a record either of God's deeds or of his prophecies. No longer could the types be regarded as divine inscriptions, as parts of a mystery both stable and divinely systematic. But for a few years in the late Forties, immediately before Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables,* the acknowledged scientific leader of the New England community, though already under attack from more revolutionary biologists, argued with every appearance of modernity and authority that they could. And so the types of Agassiz joined, might join, in a man's mind, with those of Emerson and those of Cotton Mather and those of Daguerre; a unique and critical moment in the history of the word and the concept, on the threshold of a new age and a new order.

It is curious that the general opinion of Hawthorne scholars should be that expressed by E. Wagenknecht when he remarks that although Hawthorne knew Agassiz personally he had "no more interest than Dickens" in "the great scientific discussions and speculations of the nineteenth century." One could begin the refutation of this view by mentioning Hawthorne's indisputable interest in mesmerism and

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phrenology; for these were all of great general interest at the time, and were by many intelligent people regarded as sciences. The fact that they have since been stripped of this distinction is not to the point.

However, the present point is not Hawthorne's interest in this moment of medical science, but the probability that he was far from indifferent to the new senses given to the concept of types by the authority of Agassiz, which had come to complicate the older typologies. The proof is to be found in *The House of the Seven Gables.* We have seen that the names of the characters — Pyncheon, Maule, Holgrave — all allude to aspects of that complicated word. A similarly oblique hint at another is provided by the Pyncheon hens.

These degenerate birds are ordinarily treated as a sort of arch decorative parallel to the Pyncheons, similarly declined; and indeed they are that so; but there is so much about the hens in the novel that to limit their function thus is to call Hawthorne immoderate, tedious and obvious. What seems to have happened is this: when all Boston was discussing Agassiz and the fixity of types, Hawthorne remembered and returned to what had formerly been the *locus classicus* of such discussions among educated men, namely the *Natural History* of Buffon. Years before he had borrowed the fourth volume of the translation of the Salem Library and so acquainted himself with views that were of special interest to Americans.

Buffon believed the types to be invariant — an elephant was always an elephant, and never turned into anything else — but allowed that within the type changes might be wrought by time. These changes were degenerative; thus an animal that was removed from its native habitat, or domesticated, would grow smaller. In particular he believed, and argued in his fourth volume, that this degeneration occurred in European species when they were transplanted to the New World.

Some of the celebrity, or notoriety, of these opinions was doubtless owing to Jefferson's careful refutation of them in his *Notes on Virginia.* Obviously Buffon's inversion of the familiar terms of the *translatio* was totally unacceptable to Jefferson, especially since man was included among the species that degenerated in the West. What about the mammoths? To forestall the damaging reply that there certainly *had* been mammoths, but that they existed no longer, Jefferson insists on the vastness of the continent, and the certainty that there are mammoths around somewhere, the species having been created in-

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variant and inextinguishable and these alone refuted Buffon's contention that in America "la nature est beaucoup moins agissante, beaucoup moins forte."

And so Jefferson defended not only nature but America against "this new theory of the tendency of nature to belittle her productions on this side of the Atlantic." In doing so he produced a patriotic wartime version of the old *translatio* topic: England is in decline, "The sun of her glory is fast descending to the horizon. Her philosophy has crossed the channel, her freedom the Atlantic, and herself seems passing to that awful dissolution whose issue is not given human foresight to scan."

What has all this to do with the Pyncheon hens? Buffon, in his fourth volume, uses the domestic hen to illustrate his thesis. The hen, he explains, is not native to the new world, and this, in addition to decline by domestication, has caused it greatly to diminish in size. In the wild, he argues, the type is as large as a crow, but the American examples have shrunk to the size of a pigeon. The sexual force of the cocks is also much diminished by the Atlantic passage; ideally, each should have a seraglio of fifteen hens. Buffon then passes to a consideration of the native turkey.

The House of the Seven Gables is undoubtedly a serious and topical book — which is what Melville meant when he spoke of its "apprehension of the absolute condition of present things"; and Hawthorne was animated by a powerful sense of the historical crisis through which he was living, and to which he referred, with conscious geological extravagance, in *The Blithedale Romance:* "It was impossible . . . not to imbibe the idea . . . that the crust of the earth in many places was broken, and its whole surface portentously heaving; that it was a day of crisis, and that we ourselves were in the critical vortex" (XVI). It is as if a Cuverian catastrophe, an epochal alteration of types, was upon him. Yet he also saw that there was an element of the ridiculous in what he was attempting in *Seven Gables:* "Sometimes, when tired of it, it strikes me that the whole is an absurdity, from beginning to end; but the fact is, in writing a romance, a man is always, or always ought to be, careening on the utmost verge of a precipitous absurdity, and the skill lies in coming as close as possible, without actually tumbling over." The Pyncheon hens are an instance of such careening.

There had been no connection between the Pyncheons of the Old and the New Worlds for two centuries (Cap. IV), and the same is of

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course true of their hens. They were "pure specimens of a breed which had been transmitted down as an heirloom in the Pyncheon family, and were said, while in their prime, to have attained almost the size of turkeys." Hephzibah preserves an old eggshell almost as large as that of an ostrich. But now "the hens were scarcely larger than pigeons," which made it "evident that the race had degenerated, like many a noble race besides, in consequence of too strict a watchfulness to keep it pure."

The point is one that Hawthorne often makes in a more general way. The English breed has changed in New England, the people are more nervous, quicker. In *The Scarlet Letter* he contrasts the delicate modern Bostonian woman with her seventeenth-century ancestress; he has in mind a necessary degeneracy from all old-world types that Americans choose to preserve in the new habitat, whether they are noble families, their costs of arms, or their English gardens, across which might burst, as again in *The Scarlet Letter,* some enormous New World squash. But the hens make the point diagrammatic as well as comic. The cock is the size of a partridge, the hens the size of quails. The chicken looks small enough to be still in the egg, yet experienced enough to have been "the founder of the antiquated race," a kind of walking embryo which has "aggregated into itself the ages, not only of these living specimens of the breed, but of all its forefathers and foremothers."

For change is the law of the New World, and it is the failure to accept it, to avoid an habitual and too rigid reference back to the old, that hinders the fulfillment of a destiny appropriate, spiritually and materially, only to a new order. About these matters Hawthorne is complex and hesitant, as always; the shadows of that old world are varyingly obtrusive, beyond elimination. Here his hesitancy is, in Henry James's sense, playful, but the play is on the old and new, on Buffonian degeneracy (which is an evolutionary instrument) and the acceptance of a world in which certain types ought not to survive — in which families decline from the patriciate to the proletariat, and it is reasonable to speak of the necessity to rebuild houses in every generation. Yet they do survive, in their riddling way, faded like the old carpets and the old claims to inheritance (the old map laying claim to the New World).

There is another typological joke in the *Seven Gables;* only as such can the repetitive theme of the urchin's visits to Hepzibah's shop

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be explained. He has designs on her whole stock of "natural history," those gingerbread animals made in moulds, or types.

As an emblem of time the urchin is supported by Jaffrey's watch and by the sundial, whose "shadow looks over the shoulder of the sunshine" (XIII). Time destroys the exemplar; what resists it, though perhaps not without variation in the exemplar, is the type. This is, in a sense, Hawthorne's subject, the degree to which withered "bygones" must be a part of the present and future. They are of the old world, types of it, whether they are human, vegetable, social — for armorial bearings are types too, yet their owners preserve them, like genetic traits, into a plebeian future. One sees why Melville stressed the modernity of the book, and why Hawthorne used so many devices to foster its uncertainty, its ambiguity, its hesitancy, allowing the text to waver in authority, equivocating about tradition and history, falsely emphasising some points and letting others slip by unstressed.

That Holgrave belongs to a new age, and enjoys its considerable discontinuity with the old, is frequently emphasised, at any rate until the book's strange conclusion. He is modern, rootless, so much so that the text takes on an unusual note of authority in condemning him for desiring too revolutionary a change, too violent an abandonment of the past, too ready a belief in the "golden era" about to begin. "Altogether in his culture, and want of culture — in his crude, wild and misty philosophy, and the practical experience that counteracted some of its tendencies; in his magnanimous zeal for man's welfare, and his recklessness of whatever the ages had established in man's behalf; in his faith and in his infidelity; in what he had, and in what he lacked — the artist might fitfully stand forth as the representative of many compeers in his native land" (XII). In Holgrave we see how millennial and translational myths survive the supersession of their old-world cultural and religious contexts. Henry James rightly found in him something of Hawthorne himself, "American of the Americans," one whom "the idea of long perpetuation and survival always appeared to have filled . . . with a kind of horror"; but he is also, like Hawthorne, shadowed by the perpetuities he has rejected.

Later Hawthorne was to meditate, in the *Marble Faun,* on Rome as an image of these perpetuities: timeless, the type of the City and of human civility, yet, in the aspect of time, a place of filth, corruption and superstition. In Holgrave's New England the perpetuities are less evident. The types survive in their shadowy way, culturally or genetically transmitted; but Holgrave is one who records the whole, on a

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modern photographic plate, with as little interference from past portraiture as may be. And yet his daguerrotypes of Jaffrey repeat the Gothic evil of the old portrait. And he himself, as I have said, inherits some of the dangerous powers of the old type of artist, now called "magnetic" or "sympathetic" or the like. It is by a story, a work of art, that he goes near to mesmerizing Phoebe; typically, it is a story *about* mesmerism. To be an artist at all is to involve oneself in making a new version of old types, to exercise the power that makes portraits, and some mirrors, so ominous. Holgrave's desire to destroy the past, dissolve the continuity between generations by destroying family houses, establish a democracy without a history, is frustrated in the end, though his present is to the past as daguerrotype is to portrait, the new house to the old, mesmerism, or "magnetism," or "influence," to witchcraft and Maule's curse.

The text of the novel imitates him in this; its Gothic materials — lost maps, inherited courses — its magic, its confusion of the "traditionary" and the historical, its allegories cunningly too clear or too obscure — are all evasions of narrative authority, and imply that each man must make his own reading. The types inscribed on it are shifting, unstable, varying in force, to be fulfilled only by the determinations of the reader; in strong contrast, then, to the old Puritan types. So the text belongs to its moment and implicitly declares that the modern classic is not, like the book of God or the old book of Nature, or the old accommodated classic, of which the senses, though perhaps hidden, are fully determined, there in full before the interpreter. In the making of it the reader must take his share. This is the sense in which *Seven Gables* justifies Henry James's remark that Hawthorne, though he inherited the Puritan conscience and some of its modes of operation, nevertheless altered it: "it was only, as one may say, intellectual; it was not moral or theological. He played with it. . . ." Of course this is serious play, and the same qualification must be borne in mind when one endorses James's other observation, that Hawthorne's imagination is "profane."

We are told twice that Holgrave lives by a new law; it is a profane law, typically related to the Covenant of Grace only as that was to the Covenant of Works; indeed less so, since the catastrophe of the times, represented by palpable changes in society, in history, in art, has made all typologies problematical. This is the topic with which Hawthorne plays in *Seven Gables*. He had done so with much more direct allusion

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to older typology in its greater predecessor, *The Scarlet Letter*. But that too is a bubble of fugitive typologies, consciously modern, carefully unauthoritative, open to multiple interpretation because the modern world is so.

The Letter itself is, of course, a type, variously engraved and susceptible to multiple interpretation. God may, as the characters of the novel believe, have inscribed the world with types; inscribing this world, the novel, with types is a much less certain proceeding. It is for the reader to make sense of the inscriptions, by his own imaginative collaboration. Once again, tradition is part of the chorus of voices that confuse all relations between the words of the text and what they refer to, much as the mirror distorts, and the armour, and the forest pool. In such a book text and reality stand in no enantiomorphic relation; the text continually questions its own references; the types with which it is inscribed are of very uncertain provenance and meaning, for the simple senses of the old typology and the old pneumatology are suspended. "Indistinctness and duplicity of impression" are words applicable not only to Dimmesdale but to the text itself, and Hawthorne uses many means to enforce them. Here, then, is another work that contemplates the ancient assumptions from over the threshold of the modern; the old contracts between signifier and signified, between the authoritative maker and the reader certain that there is a right interpretation, are boldly broken. Such a text must continually draw attention to itself as something written, as open and plural, itself a type of things to come, in a time when all books must be read with a difference.

Chillingworth is a herbalist, expert therefore in the doctrine of signatures, belonging to a time in which nature proclaimed, to the scholar, its divinely-instituted structures and senses — a world, then, very unlike what the intrusive voice in the text calls "the opaque substance of today." The types of the book of God have grown ambiguous. "Awful hieroglyphics" are written on the cope of heaven — as our forefathers believed and tradition reports; but Dimmesdale interprets them in a sense peculiar to himself. He alone, says the text, was responsible for the reading. So with the text iself; the truths written on its firmament are the responsibility of each reader. We proceed, as it were, from truth to shadowy types. The letter itself varies in meaning; the text undercuts traditional interpretations in the light of what it calls 'modern incredulity', in the light of the "refined present" and its

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lost certainties. The past grows obscure, like those "half-obliterated coats of arms" brought over from the old world, like the Governor's garden, dominated by the new, extrasystematic pumpkin. Whether it is a rosebush or the wilderness, the symbol hesitates, grows occult to the modern eye. The interpretative light falls differently, from the imagination and not from heaven.

Is the forest what the text will allow us to believe, an emblem or type of the "moral wilderness," or of pastoral sympathy, which it also proposes? What are we encouraged to make of the brook, the old tree? Of the Black Man, through whom nature is associated with the demonic? Is Chillingworth diabolical, or is that a naive opinion and what he himself, in a remarkable expression which, more than any other, tells us how Hawthorne must be read, calls a "typical illusion?" "The reader," says the text as it draws to its end, "may choose among these theories." May we choose to say that in associating nature and sex with evil, with the breaking of a law and a necessary punishment, the old world erred? That its strict antithesis between nature and grace made no allowance for the extra-ordinary overdetermination of nature? All that is, at least, licit. Dimmesdale, returning from his moment with Hester in the mock-paradise of the forest, becomes almost comically an enemy of grace; and yet in his experience sin seems to produce a certain abundance of grace, and we can say (though we can also deny) that had he not sinned he could not have preached as he did.

Pearl is the crucial instance, embodying the oxymoron "native grace," and variously proposed as elf, child of sin, witch-child, child of Misrule; a visitor, nevertheless, from the "spiritual world" (XIII), and the agency by which her mother is prevented from founding a new Antinomian, and so in a measure naturalist, religion. The child is repeatedly associated with mirrors and reflections; the mirror is the type of the type, but in Hawthorne, it is usually mysterious or distorting, denying the possibility of a simple relation between image and reality, sign and referent. So we cannot know where we have her. Is she an allomorph of the ambiguous Letter itself? A natural child excluded, for most of the book, from the human family that is held together by grace? A Florimell both true and false? Anyway, Pearl plays her part in enforcing the submission of Dimmesdale, and not only enters the restricted family of grace but disappears to the Old World, with its types of nobility, its dark armorial bearings; while Hester, still wearing her own type, rejoins the community on new terms. Pearl drifts back to the

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world of types; Hester is a prophetic type of the new world. The fulfillment of this type must be obscure, and between the theories that she is a type of natural disorder, or, like Holgrave, of "a new order peculiar to herself," the text can only say "the reader may choose."

Out of these problematically inscribed types, and within certain limits, we make the book according to the order or disorder of our own imagination. Dimmesdale's sermon can be thought of as the true type of the text itself. Men may have a truth, we are told, but be unable to communicate it for lack of the Pentecostal gift, "symbolising, it would seem, not the power of speech in foreign and unknown languages, but that of addressing the whole human brotherhood in the heart's native language" (XI). Dimmesdale, for all his black heart, admits to having this power (XVII). And when he preaches his sermon the text gives us not one word of it, in any language (XXII), though it speaks to each man in his own way, prophesying the high destiny of the New World. This pentecostal sermon is the text's comment on itself: guilty, inspired, all things to all men, obscurely prophesying a future empire under a new Law.

So the book speaks of itself, and, over and over again, of types (e.g. X, XIV, XXIII, XXIV) and typical illusions. Hester is "a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe"; yet she is also, like Hallam, and in the spirit of a very modern typology, a prophetic type, shadowing a future woman free of the old law in a time when "a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness"; this Antinomian prophecy we are invited to associate with Anne Hutchinson. Prevented by her sin from establishing such a religion in her own time, Hester may be prophetess of another time, her type may find its antitype in a new world liberated from the past. The text does not assert these prophecies and types; it is too deliberately unauthoritative to say anything so positive. Yet in the end Hester's A takes the place of the old armorial bearings on the tomb; a new type, a new-world type, to be interpreted by the imagination, by the choosing reader, in place of the fixed senses of the old, though the inscription, ironically, uses the old precise heraldic language: "On a field, sable, the letter A, gules."

Much more might be said of the deliberate hesitations of Hawthorne, the acuity of his sense of the transitional moment, and the manner in which he sought to invent a modern book, mimetic only in the most unstable way, aware of itself, pondering its relation to the

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past and also the future. In his last completed novel he undertook a more explicit encounter with the past at its imperial centre, the Rome of *The Marble Faun,* far from what he calls the "broad and simple daylight" of modern New England. Since Hawthorne cannot have his Holgravian way, and every half-century destroy by fire a town's accumulation of guilt and filth, he sees the eternal city as the sibylline recipient of a "grievous boon of immortality." Coexistent with this immemorial and perpetually present past is the present of Kenyon's own new world: "In that fortunate land, each generation has only its own sins and sorrows to bear. Here, it seems as if all the weary and dreary Past were piled upon the back of the Present" (XXXIII). Yet Rome is also the centre of "that central clime, whither the eyes and the heart of every artist turn" (VI). Perhaps they ought not to; Hilda, by growing so perfect a copyist of the old, abandons the gift with which she might have enriched her own new world.

What is remarkable is Hawthorne's double vision of Rome. It is the *urbs aeterna,* centre of perpetual empire, besides which all other places are provincial (XXIV). It is the monument of a past when Italy was "yet guiltless of Rome" (XXVI), stretching back to the date of the faun and dryad, and, in art, to the obelisk in the Piazza del Popolo, oldest of things, even in Rome (XII). It is the classic Rome, closer to us than those Gothic centuries between, which "look further off than the Augustan age" (XVIII). It is the Rome of St. Peter's seen in its entirety, "the world's cathedral" (XII). But it is also the Rome that "lies, a long-decaying corpse," among centuries of filth and squalor, amid "the grime and corruption which paganism had left there, and a perverted Christianity had made more noisome " (XLV); the Rome of malaria, foul air; the Rome in which even the Carnival, though partaking of the city's perpetuity, is mean and degenerate. At the end of his career Hawthorne rediscovers the Rome that is timeless yet exists in the aspect of time.

Hilda's ambiguous relation with the art, and with the religion, of Rome, is that of the new to the old empire, the one more spiritual but also, even in being less evil, less connected to humanity and to art. On the one hand there is the corruption of Donatello's nature, which is also the birth of his soul, and the creative decadence of Miriam; on the other the priggishness of Kenyon, the new-world chastity of Hilda. There is the provinciality of America, its obvious past never more than a generation or two back, with no use for marble, and a taste for vulgar

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and rootless iconographies, satirised by Kenyon when he jokes about a possible American equivalent for the fountain of Trevi — the ancient deities pulled down, and thirty-one spouts, one for each state, pouring into one vast basin, symbolising "the grand reservoir of national prosperity" (XVI). Yet Rome represents that heritage of sin, the loss of natural joy, which, it is suggested, though as usual the suggestion is contested, may make of history a fortunate fall, from which "we might rise to a far loftier paradise." (L).

For the classic of the modern *imperium* cannot be, as the Bible had been, and Virgil too, a repository of certain, unchanging truths. Truth in art — itself a dangerous and perhaps ambiguously evil activity —will have the hestitancy, the instability, of the attitude struck by the new world, provincial and unstable itself, towards the corrupt maturity of the metropolis. This is why one cannot even try to read Hawthorne, that great inventor of American attitudes to the metropolitan past, as one is still urged to read Virgil. To say that the meaning of *The Scarlet Letter,* or of *The House of the Seven Gables,* is the meaning Hawthorne meant, is pointless; his texts, with all their varying, fading voices, their controlled lapses into possible inauthenticity, are meant as invitations to co-production on the part of the reader.

In this sense it may be said that the texts of the once innocent new empire in the west of necessity at once lose their innocence; accommodations needed by the old classics after a lapse of years are required by these modern classics from every reader, from the very beginning of their existence. This had to be so, if there were to be a new-world art, which, itself reticent and opaque, could hint at the true relation between the old *imperium* and the new.

By this route, we reach the modern classic, which offers itself only to readings which are encouraged by its failure to give a definitive account of itself. Unlike the old classic, which was expected to provide answers, this one poses a virtually infinite set of questions. And when we have learnt how to ask some of the questions we may discover that the same kinds of question can also be put to the old classic. The modern classic, and the modern way of reading the classic, are not to be separated.

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Mark Mirsky

MOROCCAN LETTER

I went to Morocco before Israel because I wanted to return to ancient dreams. All the hot June and May afternoons chained to a back seat in Hebrew School classrooms, my soul thirsted after desert and exile, the lost tribes. Our Israeli relatives smacked more of Miami Beach than the tents of Judah, a streak of shrewd camel breeder to them, it was true, but the dust of their feet smelt strong of prosaic asphalt.

There is something in the air of Morocco that is fever. Your head never quite clears of it. As if people have wiped their ass with the chicken that appears in your couscous. Flies thick like peppercorns on the meat in the butcher's stalls.

Tony Kerrigan who was here years ago told me of kids peeing on his shoe to get attention. I saw some pretty English girls from the Algeciras ferry a few hours later in the Petit Socco surrounded by a table of tough looking young locals. I fantasize the incredible gang bang that must have taken place late that night in one of the seedy residencias, perhaps that of which the guide book relates, "You pay a flat rate for the room and it doesn't matter if there are three, four, or five to the bed."

Man liberated—to be a rugged English girl from some industrial slum come on a weekend holiday to get my "jollies."

The knowing look in the eyes of eight, nine year old boys who follow you around trying to become your guides. One remembers the

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elegant coiffure of the "queens" sitting at the cafes in Algeciras waiting for the ferry.

Gide's country, whooh ha! Tangiers!

* * *

I write to a friend. ". . . the very depth, the pitch horror, a city with no history, customs, manners, the sweepings of everywhere tending down into this sinkhole. After a day in it being clawed over by young boys, I fled to the synagogue, a whole street of them, directed by the owner of the hotel who it turned out is Jewish (the Hotel Continental which has Mogen Dovids in the iron work of its ballustrades and fierce mosquitoes hiding in its closets) where I encountered on the Rue des Synagogues, a tiny alley officially named thus which shelters about ten little shuls, a shamus who leaped from a doorway seeing me eye an old synagogue door and bore me off to make a minyan. Crumbling houses of study, one filled with tarnished silver ornaments thick as a field of flowers, swinging from the ceiling. Why am I here? It is all too frightening and familiar, the haggling desperate energy of the streets outside, it stinks of Dorchester, the Jewish ghetto I grew up in and I can feel the Arab blood of a half brother, Ishmael, beating in my temples. I seek my clan. To be singular, chosen, in this mass.

* * *

Fez. Here in the synagogue I met a hapless young old man living out of a collection of homemade bottled soups and preserves in a mouldy apartment on the top of a cracked and already collapsing modern apartment building, a suite where he invited me to stay. I explained that I had already taken rooms at the Hotel du C. T. M. The grandson of Fasi rabbis, he had stayed behind while his family went on to Israel. Most of the Jews had left. All the old synagogues in the Mellah were shut and only a Gallicized middle class remnant remained in a new synagogue in the better part of town. He was in real estate. How was he doing? He shook his head, muttered in French, "The Arabs! They sell for half price. Quarter price!"

At first it was sweet as he tried to guide me through Fez but he was born luckless, a shlimuzzel, we got everywhere late, worn out, missed the principal sights, waited for hours for buses that never came in the incredible heat of summer African afternoons. He was ready to run around all day with me but I ended up paying most of the bills. Yet

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hopping with enthusiasm over a box of strawberries, a walk to a mountain waterfall and the children from the synagogue clustered around him with that crazy tenderness they have for adults who have never grown up. I recognized him as he begged me to stay a few more days, go to Meknes with him, the coast. My double. a holy Nebbechel. I panicked.

Yet Fez was fantastic, the city lives still in a Babylonian twilight, old Fez at least, its streets too narrow for any transport but donkeys. One wanders in a hopelessly confusing maze of alleys from which you must finally pay someone to extract you, through twisting trunklines where the smell of excrement, spearmint, hashish, perfume, rotting tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, move one back and forth from disgust to ravishment; streets where they blow still upon the coals of primitive forges, blacksmiths; of wooden shuttles, children holding the spools for their father, the tailor; whole families banging away on sheets of copper and brass copying designs from the mosque doors; open stalls of the carpenters where sawdust fills the air and stables of raw brown and white wool spilling out, the innards of a giant's pillow; streets where the dye is still stirred by hand, hand dipped, puddles of purple, red, in that road, cloth squeezed over the river bank so that the waters run mirky with color. Every third man has a dropped eye, an amputated limb. Wet dough on the heads of the girls being borne to the communal bakery where like the demipotentate of Pharaoh's Egypt, the baker regulates the neighborhood insertion of its daily miracle, the risen bread. And then one comes to the cool white chessboards of the mosques hidden in the midst of squalidness, those courtyards which are altars of the sun, one walks the walls of orange mud which girdle Fez with gun loopholes, towers of stone and sand, ancient, horrible, marvelous. No, close your eyes to Tangiers and come on to Fez before we Americans break through the walls with our cars, air conditioning, electricity and sell the dirt back to the Moroccans as a souvenir.

We talk about how crowded the world is but in these old, old streets one feels what it means to overpopulate a nest. Human beings cluster naturally like bees (or rats).

I understand the Sabbath, the day of rest.

I keep seeking out synagogues, as if the door to Paradise lay concealed in the dusty tiles, beyond the broken ark of these deserted boxes of prayer. In Tangiers the tarnished silver hangings, a confused heap of filigreed lamps as I hoist myself up on a window sill to look in, are

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Aladdin's dream. A young girl, in Marrakesh, her breasts poking through a white jersey, about fourteen, shows me her grandfather's synagogue, a large granite room just beyond the family kitchen. She speaks a bit of English, laughs and smiles, dancing on her toes as I draw her out and I dream that night in my hotel, still feverish from the heat, of carrying her off to America.

* * *

From Fez I went down to Ksar es Souk by bus. A moment of pathos in Fez, when I visited the apartment of the balding young man. He showed me a tiny stuffy room with one bed in it, the hallway was his kitchen. I realized that it was his own bed he was prepared to share with me and a wave of sadness and horror came up in my throat, something noble and desperate in this hospitality. It was absolute, overwhelming and I fled it. Again and again, I met it in Morocco, people ready to share their whole life with you. On the bus from Fez to Ksar es Souk which was really my first penetration of the interior, the train being a civilized half polite means of travel, now I began my journey into a hidden Morocco; half the bus feverish, squatting by its battered side to shit, women bringing their olive breasts out to feed the babies. I struck up a conversation with four Arab students, some of them spoke English, the boy next to me, marvelously handsome, almost girlish spoke only French but in broken phrases we discussed the countryside and became enamoured of each other's curiosity. He wanted me to come along with him and his schoolmates on their vacation, go back and stay with his family in Fez next week, such a sudden outpouring of good feeling. We embraced when he got up to leave the bus in the first mountain village, Ifrane, where he and the other students were debarking for a week of fun. There was an immediate friendship possible with these students, their fascination for everything was absolute. They wanted to learn so badly.

Ksar es Souk is at the center of a red clay desert. The heat is unbearable although I was to find it got worse as I went further south. My hotel, a hole, no ventilation, so stifling that I kept getting up at night to douse myself with water from the shower (unaccountably cold) and lie evaporating in the sheets. I hardly slept. The first night on my way to the hotel I thought I would disappear around a corner and never be heard of again. The place was more desolate and frightening than Riohacha, Marquez's pirate town at the end of the Columbian coast. At a

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restaurant off the square I met some Dutch girls in the company of one boy. Hard as I tried I could not inveigle myself into their evening but they did tell me about a market in Rissani which I could reach by bus and taxi. I tried to persuade them to go with me but the boy had almost fainted from the heat on his way back the day before.

An American girl with frazzled blond hair bursts into the restaurant. A Moroccan boy is with her but instead of sitting down he turns around and rushes out the door. I stare. A few minutes later an excited throng of young Moroccan boys dressed in hip, modish clothes gathers in the doorway all talking furiously, pointing at her. The boy I saw with her before, detaches himself from the group and sits down. "What's happening, man?" she asks.

Later, coming back to my hotel, after wandering through Ksar es Souk in the dark, I find her at the door with a toothbrush in hand, surrounded by the same knot of admirers. As I pass through the lintels I can't avoid a long curious look. She gazes back with glassy eyes, "Something wrong?"

"No, no," I mutter, shaking my head.

* * *

"Laughter covers all," that note is scribbled at the bottom of a letter postmarked August 25th, that has just arrived from a friend last seen in the back of a truck between jostling bullocks, rams, goats, veiled daughters of his village, a watermelon (homecoming gift) on his shoulder, waving goodbye as my taxi diverged from his lorry headed into deeper reaches of the Sahara.

Seeking directions to Rissani in the market place of Ksar el Souk, I found myself in the midst of English speaking Berbers. They were riding on to Erfoud, students at the end of a school term, and boarding the bus I found myself in the midst of questions about America. "And how do they treat Blacks in America?" boomed behind my ear. I turned around to face a laughing deep ebony next to companions olive and nut brown. "Not so good, eh?"

I smiled. "How do they treat them here?" Sly glances among his fellow Berbers, contradictory answers, babbling among themselves in Arabic, French, Berber, and we started talking about Blacks in America, progress, discrimination. When I came to mixed marriages, the number of white girls who married blacks in the U. S., he seemed astonished. It was difficult to get a clear sense of color lines in Morocco.

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Sometimes one would be told that it made no difference. Other students said that while families of different color lived in the same ksar, they didn't intermarry. The hues of skin tell a dozen stories.

Abu, the dark student, wanted to know about Harlem blacks who had been thrown out of Israel. As I recalled they migrated first to Liberia, then to Israel, balked at certain jobs. I had seen Black rabbis and Chassidim in New York. How about the Ethiopian fellashah, considered authentic by Israel. The doors were open to an oriental immigration of Jews the same color as the passengers on the bus. I footnoted the number of Jewish girls in America attracted to Blacks, fellow feeling, victims of injustice? This tickled Abu, and we both clucked at the bounty. Did I not receive the bequests of charity among the Protestant virgins of anti-Semitic Wellesley, Mass., o bygone era?

Getting off in the blinding red heat of Erfoud, I had been invited to one of the student's houses for dinner but it was five miles walk and I was afraid of the sun. So I started to climb back on the bus which was going to Rissani, the camel port, where there were only tracks into the desert. "Aren't you going to look at Erfoud?" Abu called.

"I will if you show it to me."

"Sure." We go into a tiny restaurant, villainous looking, for lunch. Abu guides. The food is delicious and my bowels knit together over the lamb, vegetables, sugary watermelon. Our conversation goes back and forth from pidgin English (his) to pidgin French (mine) arguing about race. He laughs all through our talk, grinning.

"You are a dangerous man," I say.

"Why?"

"Your smile."

"What about my smile?" His face is serious. I grope for French.

"A man who smiles, no matter what you say, can be feeling anything. A powerful weapon." On the bus, discussing Israel, Abu was the only one whose good humor was unperturbed.

"Are you insulting me?" His expression is grave.

"Non, non, mon cher ami, je suis . . ." I leaf at breakneck speed through my dictionary, for "I am teasing you."

His face breaks back into a smile as I reach across the table and grasp his hand.

We walk out of the restaurant, leave the shade of the town walls, go down to look at the river. The sun, heat, is unbelievable. I stagger along, amazed that I am not fainting, while Abu's black skin drinks it

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in, an aperitif of Vitamin C. The conversation has turned to books, Camus, *L'Etranger.*

The Arab shot down under the hallucinations of Meurseault in the sun while I sway beside my Berber friend expecting a stroke, buoyed by the grotesque correspondance and the ferocity of our argument. But Abu backs away from our disagreement with a shattering smile, "This is what my teacher says. You understand. I do not know, this is my teacher's opinion."

We are at the water's edge. In the courses of these southern deserts, the guidebook prophesizes a host of plagues, bilharzia for a moment's immersion. "You would like a swim?"

"Not here."

"A swimming pool." His eyes twinkle.

Pulling my leg? I follow him as he turns, anxious to get back in the shade. My brother produced a swimming pool filled with Parisian girls in bikinis, a French Auberge Jeunesse in the middle of the wilderness.

We dive into the blue waters. His black body gleams in transparent ether. We touch as we race back and forth in the pool. A thrill runs through me as we laugh and I remember seeing a Negro Chassid pressed into the long swaying line of men at the Lubovitcher Rabbi's in Brooklyn, a rope of prayer.

Later in Tinerhir, after I announce to a table of curious young men with whom I share a pot of sweet, rank spearmint tea, that I am Jewish, they ply me with questions, information about the Jewish Berbers who left the town, ten, fifteen years ago. The next day, one of the young men who is studying literature at college, brings me some articles studiously copied out of a journal in French of Arabic literature, circa 1912, about the movements of the Jewish merchants through the south of Morocco and the independent kingdoms they established. The Jews were here long before the Arabs, they tell me. Some at the table are pure Berber, others mixed.

Do they write in Berber? I ask. No, they say, there are no more books in Berber. Under the French it was encouraged but now it is only a spoken language. They are reticent and I don't want to push the discussion past a mutual ironic understanding. Here in the South, at least, they seem sad that the Jews have left; pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli as a matter of form, but wistful about their fellow townsmen of so many thousands of years. So, my Jewish Bedouins are gone. Flown off

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on eagles wings? I am too late. They are at the Tel Aviv Beach. And even Ishmael, our brother is putting off to his tents on a motorscooter, his camel forgotten. It is I, with my picture on the back of my book, who is the magical creature. How passionate they are for details of the world outside. Walking across the red desert in Rissani with Abu looking for an Alouite tomb, I repeat Thoreau's line, trying to qualify his political enthusiasm, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." He makes me write it down for him, wants more. I try to recall fragments I have by heart of Thoreau, Emerson, Alfred North Whitehead. In his letter he says, "I want that the correspondence would continue between us as lessons."

Rising out of the pool, dripping, Abu is sated with water. Not me, I could stay there all afternoon. I see the French girls through my friend's eyes, their nakedness outrageous coming from the world of veiled, hidden females. His black body crackles with electricity from all this revealed white breast and thigh. We grin together as they pass.

Hours later when we say goodbye in Rissani by the lorry that will carry him off, the girls from his village who are at the market, cluster around him. They lift cloth veils from across their mouths as they recognize him; shyly they peek at me almost ready to draw back behind the curtain, but seeing I am a friend of Abu's they let it drop. There are blue tattoos on their chins, coins of silver shining on their temples, colored threads run through their black shawls, beautiful sisters, and I want to run off with them.

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GOING TO THE MOVIES

Jonathan Baumbach

EUROPE IN AMERICA

For those who resist subtitles a number of new American directors, many of them from academic backgrounds, offer us, through the mediation of personal disguise and/or vision, the glories of the new (wave) European cinema. We tend to like our culture watered and for all our boisterous chauvinism have generally had contempt for our own achievements in the arts. The irony of course is that that selfsame new wave, in France at least, created itself out of a love for American genre films—for movies—most of which went uncelebrated in their own time and country.

The most successful of the new breed of critic-filmmakers, Peter Bogdanovich, is an oblique exception to the rule. Bogdanovich's nostalgia—his mode and essential theme—has to do with American, not European, filmmakers (Hawks, Ford, Welles, etc.), to whom he pays homage by doing serious imitations and variations on their best work. Bogdanovich has always seemed to me a premature old master, his vision a pastiche, meticulously wrought and controlled, of great moments from classic American movies. His films have been calculatedly moving and funny, avoiding small mistakes at the expense of spontaneity, as if a talented archivist were redoing pieces of film history in case the originals were destroyed by fire.

So although I've never particularly disliked his "quality" films—sometimes taste and intelligence go a long way—my ardor for Bogdanovich's oeuvre has always been slight. With middling expectations then—I had been Gatsbyized a few weeks before and expected I could live a full life without

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sitting through another respectful literary adaptation—I stayed to like *Daisy Miller*. A few genuinely inspired moments in Bogdanovich's coolly reverent translation of the James short novel, among the care and exceeding taste of the rest, save the movie from its determinedly modest self-importance.

The closing sequence is a particular triumph, a piece of audacity that moves us in a way that nothing in the film prepares us to expect. We experience through Winterbourne a sense of waste and lost, an irrevocable past unspent, the shame of having willfully misperceived the object of his love (too late to be done or undone). It is James's theme, and Bogdanovich seems peculiarly alive to it as if it were a shared vision they had arrived at by separate routes. If possible, Bogdanovich seems an even greater partisan of American spontaneity and innocence—the very qualities lacking in his work—than James. The freezing of the image of Winterbourne at Daisy's grave, as the color bleaches out by degrees, achieves a visual correlative for Winterbourne's deepening realization of loss. The last dialogue between Winterbourne and his aunt, an apparent flash forward, is heard on the sound track as if it were something rehearsed over and over again in Winterbourne's consciousness.

Bogdanovich, who relies heavily on performances in his other films, transcends the limitation of Cybill Shepherd's Daisy through image. The last scene, which evokes in a shocking revision of our perspective the attractiveness and innocence of Daisy, makes Shepherd's performance seem richer in retrospect than it does from scene to scene. Her chattering, spoiled princess of a tease appeared for the most part out of period to me as if she were merely visiting the nineteenth century, a tourist who will try anything once. Daisy's modernism—or is it Shepherd's?—her insistent impropriety, is intended no doubt as an aspect of the character's being an American in Europe.

One of the few scenes Bogdanovich added to James's narrative is an exceptional sequence in which Daisy teases her suitor Giovanelli in Winterbourne's presence by coaxing him to sing "Pop Goes the Weasel" in his operatic tenor. Her small cruelty to Giovanelli is a love message to Winterbourne he fails to perceive. A moment later, by request, Daisy sings "When You and I Were Young, Maggie," the song evoking the frontier West of our movie past. It is Cybill Shepard's best scene, and in it we glimpse the fragile bravado of her peculiarly American innocence and her character gains new focus for us. *Daisy Miller* may not be Bogdanovich's best film, but its inspired sequences are an indication that the director, contrary to prior evidence, may not have already settled for the easy success of minor accomplishment.

As *Daisy Miller* is about the rediscovery of America (in Europe) by a Europeanized American, Terrence Malick's first feature, *Badlands*, is a depiction of the American landscape of the sixties as filtered through the influence of European filmmakers—Godard *(Breathless* and *Pierrot Le Fou)* and Antonioni in particular. What distinguishes *Badlands* from other modish films

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about the dark side of the American character—that lunatic amorality disguised as pragmatism, the Vietnam of the homefront—is the intelligence of Malick's script and the uniqueness of the mise en scène. For all its borrowings, both thematic and cinematic, and the mistaken strategy of the last section in which irony descends to whimsy, *Badlands* is clearly the work of an original talent of a high order. Malick will probably make better films as he goes along, but none, I suspect, more strikingly brilliant than his first.

Kit, a James Dean look-alike, who starts out in the film as a garbage collector, moves on to achieve romantic celebrity as a mass murderer. The title is a sardonic metaphor for the country as a whole. *Badlands* is an American success story of the sixties, a time in which even a man like Richard Nixon might grow up to be President. The country's traditional goals in disrepute—anomie in various disguises having its day—killing people seems a career no less reasonable than most. Moreover, it gives a young man an excellent chance to make a name for himself.

Kit's first murder, the killing of his sweetheart Holly's father, is performed in the pursuit of love. Where Winterbourne's inertia leads him to murder by inaction, Kit's empty drive produces violent action, which is at heart equally inert. The killing of Holly's father is done of apparent necessity and without malice, and though Kit goes to comic lengths to cover his tracks by recording a suicide announcement and burning down the house with the dead body inside, the murder starts him on his "hellbent"—Holly's word as she tells the story—career. First killings, we all know from literature and popular culture, are the breaking of restraint (a kind of deflowering) and lead inevitably to others. Kit kills casually with a kind of miserable pleasure, though almost always in defense of his freedom. He remains opaque—the film makes no attempt to explain him—and mildly (we apprehend him with some detachment) likable. Malick has been criticized for being excessively cool about violence in this film as if it were a failure of responsibility not to be outraged by his characters' behavior. His characters, Kit and Holly, are cool, which is to say numb, and the film is concerned—its vision despairing and ironic—with moral numbness.

Badlands offers us the flattened landscape of metaphor and dream. Despite the fashionable despair of its theme, Malick's first feature is an exhilarating movie, its richness in the perception and self-conscious beauty of its details. The image of Holly's dollhouse burning, that microcosmic imaginary world disintegrating within the larger house, haunts the viewer after the film's narrative clevernesses have ceased to matter.

To move from *Badlands* to Claude Chabrol's most recent film, *Wedding in Blood,* is to move from large scale killing in America to petit bourgeois murder in the provinces of France. Middle-class civilization, Chabrol has been showing us in his films since *Les Biches* (1968), is a devitalized facade under

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which human passions are discreetly disguised or displaced into violence. For all their particularity of realistic detail, these later films of Chabrol rely on exaggeration and poetic intensification for their mood and power, an aspect of the director's work most reviewers seem either to miss or misperceive. Melodrama in a Chabrol film is both disguise and metaphor.

Dismissed and condescendingly admired as a maker of post-Hitchcockian melodramas, Claude Chabrol is a major filmmaker and in *Wedding in Blood* he is very nearly at the top of his form. A man and woman, each married to another in a becalmed provincial French town, fall into a savage fever of an affair. These two otherwise civilized people, one the wife of the mayor, the other the vice-mayor, make love with the greed of obsessive eaters, grunting and tearing at each other. Comic figures and ultimately murderers—one bestiality leading to another—Pierre and Lucienne (Michel Piccoli and Stephane Audran), recognizably human and sympathetic, enlist our complicity as audience in their lusts and violence. Chabrol is interested here and elsewhere in the bizarre extremes of human behavior, in the beast that resides in the dark hollows of the most repressed and respectable among us.

Wedding in Blood opens with a shot of an impassive provincial landscape like a nineteenth-century painting, a pastoral facade, over which the titles are superimposed. The boundaries of the main characters' lives are circumscribed by this unexceptionable town and the surrounding countryside. It is as if Pierre and Lucienne are unable to imagine even the possibility of living elsewhere, their world beginning and ending in the mind's limit. Much of the tension the film generates has to do with the lovers' being discovered, although it is never clear what real danger such discovery bodes. Only within the context of the town does either character have anything to lose. Apart, Pierre and Lucienne lead dreary, stultifying, respectable lives. We witness Pierre straining to be kind to his sickly, complaining wife, and Lucienne watching television with her daughter, bored looks on their faces, killing time. Only together do they come alive, their exaggerated passion, the source and value of their lives. To have more time together—it seems in context a reasonable solution, a way to freedom—they kill their burdensome partners.

A recitation of the plot seems hardly adequate. Although his plots employ melodrama, Chabrol is not making genre films, is not, like the American directors the *Cahiers* admires, transforming second-rate projects through subversive touches of personal vision. Chabrol's narratives are the metaphorical stuff of his vision. The mode of his films shifts without prior indication from a densely textured naturalism to an exaggerated subjective reality made manifest. Within the confines of what seems like a conventional melodramatic action, there are a number of startling sequences in *Wedding in Blood* which give the film a characteristic texture. Chabrol has a way of presenting bizarre scenes matter-of-factly and ordinary seeuences with melodramatic emphasis.

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In *La Femme Infidele,* which is the Chabrol film closest in configuration to *Wedding in Blood,* a gentle, somewhat impassive suburbanite discovers that his wife has a lover in Paris. He goes to see this adversary for a civilized discussion and in an improvisation of rage ends up killing him. At the end of the film in an extraordinary shot, Chabrol indicates that as the husband is being taken away by the police (his wife and son together watching his departure) he is closer to his family than he has ever been. Similarly, the last scene in *Wedding in Blood,* with Pierre and Lucienne in handcuffs in the back of a police van clasping hands, implies a more profound intimacy between them than anything that has gone before. Chabrol's absurd bourgeois are capable of surprising resources of dignity at the last extreme.

It is the symmetry of Chabrol's films, the aesthetic rightness of their form, that makes them at their best so satisfying. His most bizarre human transactions offer experience, which is to say evidence, of grace in the universe.

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BOOKS

HOPE WITHOUT HOPE

HOPE ABANDONED. By Nadezhda Mandelstam. Translated with a foreword by Max Hayward. Atheneum. $13.95.

In the fall of 1972, almost two decades after the death of Stalin, it took me twelve days to overcome the fears of several sane, rational, unparanoid Russians hesitant to arrange a meeting between Nadezhda Mandelstam and a writer from the West. She herself, as it turned out, scorned such hesitation, but, taking into account her past and present history, her cautious friends were probably right. We met, Osip Mandelstam's widow and I, in her small cooperative apartment on the outskirts of Moscow, the city from which she had been exiled for more than thirty years and to which she was not allowed to return till 1965, twelve years after the death of Stalin.

She was a month short of her seventy-third birthday then, a small woman, frail, ailing. For the five hours of our talk she reclined on an old Russian wooden bench, her head on flowered pillows, her green housecoat snugged by a purple wool blanket. She was proud of her window full of thriving green plants, some in flower. Someone had brought her a few red roses. As we talked a friend dropped in with a gift of watermelon. Mme Mandelstam insisted I drink her tea, which she characterized as the best in all Russia, served with broad leaves open, filling half the mug.

"Did you ever taste such tea?" she asked me. "You never did."

She followed with:

"Now you must taste this herring," trilling her *r* with that gastronomical enthusiasm lovers of food still show when they talk about the things they are no longer permitted to eat.

"Who," she asked me almost at once, "are your great men?"

I offered a few names.

"No, no, I mean the way T. S. Eliot was great. Who understands the crisis? Christianity—I think nobody."

Her name is Vera Nadezhda Lubov—Faith Hope Love—and though she considers herself a Jew, and is considered by the Soviet authorities as a Jew, was the third generation of her family to be baptized Christian. When I saw

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her she was contemplating conversion from Russian Orthodox to Roman Catholic because, she said, "many Orthodox priests do not like Jews." She had, she told me, invented a game. It goes, "Can you name five members of the intelligentsia who are Russian and not Jewish?"

She looked at me and laughed.

"Nobody could," she said.

I asked if she had contemplated applying for an exit visa to Israel.

"I sympathize with Israel, a lot," she said, "but I cannot go there because I am Christian. In Israel I think they don't like Christian Jews. Besides, I am an abolitionist, like Lincoln. If I allow them to collect seventeen thousand rubles of what they call 'education tax' I will be engaging in slave traffic. I'm against it. Is it not a shame, this slave trade?"

She tossed her head like a young girl.

"I have a friend," she said, "a member of the Academy [of Sciences] with a price of one hundred and fifty thousand rubles set on his head. By comparison I am a bargain."

Though I had ostensibly been represented to her by my go-betweens as an OK *tchelovek*, she had her own way of testing political trustworthiness.

"You must," she said, "vote for Nixon."

"If he runs against Brezhnev," I said, "I certainly will."

"Do you understand what goes on here?" she asked.

"Of course," I said, "I listen to your taxi drivers."

"Most Americans are political idiots, I think. They understand as much about Vietnam as they understand about here. If the North Vietnamese come to South Vietnam there won't be one South Vietnamese person left there."

Some, I suggested, felt that continued bombing of the North by the United States might leave North Vietnam truly bombed, in Le May's words, back into the Stone Age.

"War is terrible everywhere," said Mme Mandelstam, "but we saw things far worse than in Vietnam. Do you believe me?"

She saw I was writing her words into a notebook.

"Hey," she said, "what are you doing? I don't want visitors in high boots [the secret police]. I am not so anxious to be a *katorzhanka* [forced laborer]."

Later, when I had, evidently, passed her test, she said:

"I don't know if I am bugged. But they have heard everything. I don't make a secret about what I think of them."

In the 1930s, when the fate of Osip Mandelstam was one of the darkest mysteries of Stalin's terror, Nadezhda Mandelstam would have been considered the one person with answers to the obvious questions. When did they finally take Mandelstam away? Why then? Did they break him before he died? She could have filled in the biographical blanks because she was Osip Man-

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delstam's companion, Osip Mandelstam's wife, the person who chose his exile rather than separation from him. *Hope Against Hope,* the first volume of her memoirs, now continued with *Hope Abandoned,** proved a source book for political scholars and literary critics primarily interested in how the apparatus worked to destroy writers and intellectuals. But both books were much more than biographical addenda to the life of Osip Mandelstam: just as, say, Conrad's Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* set out to find and discuss a man named Kurtz but, in fulfilling his task, wrote another, perhaps more significant tale, of how a single human being survives "the great demoralization of the land," so Nadezhda Mandelstam, dedicated to telling the story of Mandelstam's destruction and death, writes, as counterpoint, the tale of her miraculous survival and the survival of Mandelstam's poetry.

Hers is not a happy-ending tale. In a life such as, say, Hannah Arendt's and her husband, Heinrich Bluecher's, there is an action of physical escape, even though Nazi terror incarcerates in camps and threatens death daily. Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Bluecher *did* get out, and did live to witness the destruction of not only Hitler but Hitler's Nazi and Gestapo apparatus. In 1972, when I saw Nadezhda Mandelstam in Moscow, Osip had been dead thirty-four years, Stalin nearly twenty, but the apparatus had not disappeared or even weakened. The *apparat* was, that is, unaffected by the death of Stalin in exactly the way any well-designed machine would not stop running when its inventor and perfector died. In *Hope Abandoned* Nadezhda suggests that the *apparat* has been refined and has "stood the test of time." It exists, she goes on, "to the present day, even though the individual members of it have constantly been replaced by more efficient ones."

Talking with her I felt much as I have when I have visited lifers in prison. Jokes are made about the guards and the warden, about the system, but nobody wants to be reminded of what's obvious: that the guards and warden go home at night, that they, not the prisoners, are in charge of the keys. *Hope Abandoned* is, on its most profound level, a historical novel about how a young girl, giddy as a teen-age Natasha, was seized *by* the day, locked into history, and forced, ultimately, to march to tunes Stalin could whistle. The existential playground shrinks, her freedom of field narrows till she is left standing tiptoe on a dust mote. What sustains her is her sense of not letting the sons-of-bitches beat everybody and everything down. The instrument of survival is, in fact, the *physical* existence of Mandelstam's poems, which she bears like a chalice through camps, exile, frightened friends, cowardly acquaintances. In *Hope Against Hope* she describes her life in a textile factory where she had charge of twelve machines:

*The titles are Mme Mandelstam's and the play on her name, Hope, is intentional.

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> Working on the night shift and running between one machine and another in the enormous shop, I kept myself awake by muttering M.'s verse to myself. I had to commit everything to memory in case all my papers were taken away from me, or the various people I had given copies to took fright and burned them in a moment of panic—that had been done more than once by the best and most devoted friends of literature.

Once the poems were in her head, *she* was the poems, so *she* had to survive. But wouldn't it have been far simpler to give up, let the poems go, and be shut of her hideous task? Quite apart from the particular qualities in Mandelstam's poetry, quite apart from her powerful commitment to him as her man, her love, her friend, was the *idea* of poetry, which she and Mandelstam thought of as "something sacramental." At a time when Stalin's terror threatened to be the sole definer of man's essential nature—brutal, sly, murderous, treacherous—poetry, the act of creating it, thinking it, feeling it, offered a saving alternative. Out of his misery Mandelstam constructed a "simple song of earthen hurts." Hunger, cold, despair, madness miraculously made music, metaphors, wit, rhythms, all, in Ortega's words, "objectively superfluous," all, in Nadezhda's words, proofs of man's capacity for "mysterious joy" even during "moments of silence and sadness."

She doesn't come up with some sentimental foolishness about great art compensating the broken life. Neither Nazi Germany nor the Soviet Union had poets who "sang in their chains like the sea." Chains to Nadezhda Mandelstam are metal, heavy, encircling. Neither Osip nor Nadezhda played with heroic boasts about silence, exile, and cunning. Their response to power and terror was rather "resignation, silence, and decay." The point of Mme Mandelstam's memoirs is that her fate and Mandelstam's fate were the common experience during the Stalin era. This point she almost despairs over ever being able to communicate. Once a Candide herself, she knows that those who did not experience what she and Mandelstam did are Candides too:

> Even if they have some inkling, people cannot really imagine what our life was like. Even the Germans can have no idea—perhaps only the Jews who lived under German occupation. What M. and I lived through was the common lot of everybody in this vast and fear-crazed country.

There is a force in the memoirs that grows till it dominates everything else—terror. Terror not as something general or even programmatic, but terror as "the most powerful sensation we [Nadezhda and Akhmatova] had ever known—stronger than love, jealousy, or any other human feeling." What went with terror was a "horrible and shameful awareness of utter helplessness, of being tied hand and foot." During her worst days Mme Mandelstam would test herself: do I feel shame? I do. Therefore I am. The idea of poetry was what humankind could and might do; the feeling of shame was what humankind did to stay human. Shame was man's last refuge.

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If the terror was greatest in the 1930s and, again, in the 1950s, just before Stalin died, it later only lessened temporarily, peaked, ebbed, peaked again, never weakening, never without its ability to apply new pressures. The night before I met Nadezhda Mandelstam I took trains, cabs, buses, streetcars to reach a group of dissidents I had contacted on several previous occasions. Some of them—Vadim Belotserkovsky, a democratic dissident, and Viktor Mandelsveg, a scientist—are now, fortunately, out of the Soviet Union. In 1972 these people met in secret, kissed each other on the mouth arriving and departing, feeling, like those in the Warsaw Ghetto, that any meeting might conceivably be the last time any two people saw each other. Not one of the nine people in the room was without some prison story. Some had been arrested just days earlier, for protesting against the "education tax" at the session of the Supreme Soviet. Vadim and Viktor had been intercepted by the KGB on their way to stage a sit-in; others had been put in prison for going on a public hunger strike. Their interrogators had learned their techniques from Dostoevsky's Porfyry, or from movies like Z. Everything was sham and playacting except the power.

The same night of my meeting with Nadezhda Mandelstam two friends and I went to the Intourist Hotel for some food in the middle of the night. As we entered a long corridor we heard this hideous sound of a young woman being beaten in a police interrogation room. A red-faced young man stood with his head down outside the door, unable to do anything to stop the beating. Russians and other Soviet citizens hurried by—it was past the tourist season—pretending to hear nothing unusual. And we three Westerners, Candides who knew the KGB facts of life, passed by that door too.

It's this sense of the present in the Soviet Union that Nadezhda Mandelstam wants to get through to us in her memoirs. Almost as an aside, supposedly only comparing Ukrainian Kiev, her home as a child, and Russian Moscow, her present home, she says:

> I am glad that *my* capital is Moscow, not Kiev—my native language . . . is Russian, and if Jews are going to be slaughtered in both places, better it happen to me in Moscow [where] some kindly old soul . . . will try to stop the mob with a few good-humored oaths.

Is she fanciful? Is she paranoid? Is she a religious fanatic unable to come to terms with modern realities? Can't she see that the USSR has changed, and for the better? What possible connection can there be between a killer like Josef Stalin and that prancing pixie Leonid Brezhnev who slops champagne all over himself while doing a public relations pitch on American TV? And if she thinks so highly of Vietnam Nixon, what about the Nixon who arranged the Cargill wheat deals? What about the more recent wheat shipments that saved many in the Soviet Union from hunger and even starvation? What of *détente*?

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the SALT talks? the scientific and technological exchanges? the Bolshoi tours? the Soviet musicians?

Mme Mandelstam repeats: "Most Americans are political idiots, I think." And most East Europeans are something worse, people who want to forget the past and want, too, to remain blind to the present. "We all lived on a volcano," she says in *Hope Abandoned,* "and still do." The dissidents I met in Moscow quoted the KGB interrogators: "We have brought Stalin back to life in order to take care of you," and "Existing laws are out of date for people like you. We will make new ones till you lose your foolish respect for the protection of the law." The same day I saw Nadezhda Mandelstam countless parents, children, wives, husbands, friends, brothers, sisters, asking for dissidents who had disappeared and were presumed arrested, met with the same blankness Nadezhda Mandelstam records in her memoirs. The terror was in effect. Vera Belotserkovsky, Vadim's wife, described Vadim's arrest, which took place ten feet in front of her, but which she, instinctively, didn't react to openly because she couldn't risk the arbitrary power arresting her too, and leaving her apartment empty when her small son returned from school.

Nothing of this kind surprised Nadezhda Mandelstam. "No one," she writes, "should lightly dismiss our experience, as complacent foreigners do, cherishing the hope that with them—who are so clever and cultured—things will be different." That experience, she argues, "is the only thing that can give immunity—like a vaccine or inoculation." The real danger is if "we continue to hide our experience—it cannot be tapped without making a certain effort . . . Best of all would be if we could gradually accumulate powers of resistance to the use of brute force, until the machinery ground to a halt and began to rust. But this would be a very long process for people like us with no language, no standards, no light to guide us. All we have is our craven fears."

In the memoirs Sleeping Beauty forces herself to wake without a kiss from Prince Charming. Prince Charming has disappeared and is presumed dead. But his talisman exists, forever: "Now," Nadezhda concludes, Mandelstam's poetry is printed and, therefore, "indestructible, and I therefore feel totally and absolutely free, and I can breathe easily (despite the lack of air)."

When I asked her what she was writing at the moment, she said, "I want very much to write a third book. It will be about Soviet education and Soviet washrooms. It will be a historical book. I traveled very much from 1934 to 1965 and I saw different kinds of washrooms. It will be a work of art if I can write it. It is strange. I never thought of writing such a book before. Now it seems almost necessary."

I reminded her of Kafka's answer to the question "Do you have hope?" "Yes, but not for us." She laughed. "Our men," she said, "are impotent, and our women hungry for love. Our men are not only impotent—they are idiots, liars, and afraid of Lubianka. These women," she motioned to two of her young friends, "are afraid of nothing."

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Their response was to scold her for smoking too much, and not eating enough. They warmed some beef and peas. She refused to eat.

"Please give me mayonnaise," she begged.

"No," said one of the women, "mayonnaise is poison."

"Please."

"No."

"I won't eat."

"Let her have a touch," the other woman said.

They handed Mme Mandelstam a jar. She ladled mayonnaise all over her food, then lit up a cigarette, and didn't eat a bite.

"I leave the house less and less, but I try," she said, "to go for a walk, mostly in the shops, every day. My heart is bad—"

"And your body suffers from lack of food," one of the women interrupted.

"It couldn't be any other way," said Mme Mandelstam. "I knew too much what was hunger. All we needed then was bread. But bread existed in those days only in great cities. Your American wheat will make bread for the cities now, too."

I asked her why the Soviet Union would allow Solzhenitsyn to leave the country, but not her—an unwell woman of seventy-three (she'll be seventy-five on October 31, 1974).

"I am not less dangerous than Solzhenitsyn," she said. "More."

Reading *Hope Abandoned* I came to understand what she meant. Solzhenitsyn's nationalistic, nostalgic call for a return to something resembling Czarist authoritarianism is, from the Soviet point of view, a program pitched to émigrés, not the young. Nadezhda Mandelstam honors Solzhenitsyn, shares his religious commitment, but does not agree with his political prescriptions. She is more dangerous than Solzhenitsyn because she is looking for safeguards against the terror *now*. She, like Sakharov and Medvedev, though in search of standards, fears absolutist stances.

Her message, ultimately, is *remember the past, but don't try to return to it.* And perhaps as significant as that program is the appeal that shouts above history's sounds, "Look! See! Record! Remember!" Blindness is as great a fear as terror.

As I left her stretched out on her bench, and, later, when, on the way to the airport I phoned to say good-bye, I had, again, the feeling of someone visiting in a prison those sentenced to life. God, birds, butterflies, poetry sustain people behind bars, and one uncomforting consolation, that nobody stays on in prison for ever. Nadezhda Mandelstam's writing doesn't falsify her past life, nor does she, in the present, lie to herself about the nature of existence in the Soviet Union.

She had a visitor shortly before I saw her. He asked about life in the Soviet Union.

"We are permitted," Nadezhda said, "to tell lies."

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"Tell me a lie, please," the visitor said.

"We live in a country of unbelievable freedom."

"Is that a lie?"

"No," said Mme Mandelstam.

As I write, at least ten of the dissidents I put in touch with people inside and outside the USSR have been granted visas. Nadezhda Mandelstam remains behind. Nothing anybody has tried seems able to help her. *Hope Against Hope* and *Hope Abandoned* may explain why.

Jack Ludwig

MANDELSTAM. By Clarence Brown. Cambridge University Press. $13.95.

OSIP MANDELSTAM: SELECTED POEMS. Translated by Clarence Brown and W. S. Merwin. Atheneum. $6.25.

Since his widow, Nadezhda Mandelstam, published her brilliant memoirs, *Hope Against Hope,* in 1970, the fame of Osip Mandelstam has been steadily increasing outside the Soviet Union. The harrowing story of the last decade of Mandelstam's life, which came to an end in a Siberian transit camp in 1938, has inevitably overshadowed his reputation as one of the greatest poets of our century, certainly the equal of Eliot and Yeats. It is a somber truth that the poet's experiences as an outcast victim of a vicious totalitarian state are more familiar and comprehensible to us today than is the sometimes difficult, elusive poetry for which he lived.

Mandelstam's poetry, unlike that of his close friend and contemporary Anna Akhmatova, is particularly difficult to translate. The works of the early years especially (but not exclusively) demand a good deal of commentary. Such well-known poems as "The Admiralty," "A wandering fire at a terrible height," and "On a sled covered with straw" may well present difficulties to readers who lack a basic acquaintance with Russia's cities and history; consequently, what will seem obvious to the Russian reader may appear exotic in translation. Other poems assume an easy familiarity with European and classical Mediterranean arts. (Brown tells us that Mandelstam once irritably defined Acmeism, the school with which he has been identified, as "a longing for world culture.") In many of his poems the most essential element is Mandelstam's famous mellow tonality. Mandelstam often reinforces meaning with sound, offering acoustic clues to his sometimes elusive imagery. This musical element

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of the poem can be described and analyzed by the perceptive critic; it is inconceivable that it can ever be represented in an English translation.

Clarence Brown's *Mandelstam* and *Osip Mandelstam: Selected Poems* translated by Brown and W. S. Merwin, though published separately, can be read most profitably as companion volumes. *Mandelstam* is a labor of love and scholarship, the fruit of almost two decades' devotion to the subject. It is, according to Brown, "an introduction to Mandelstam, and it is not for specialists in Russian literature." This is misleading modesty; although Brown, out of deference to his nonspecialist readers, provides translations as well as Cyrillic texts of the poems he analyzes and avoids detailed discussion of the metrics and sound texture of the poetry, there can be no doubt that this is a serious scholarly study of value to specialists and nonspecialists alike.

Adhering to the traditional artificial distinction between life and works, Brown divides his book into two sections. The division, however, is not rigidly enforced. The biographical section focuses on Mandelstam's early years. Brown contradicts with the passion of a crusader the false picture of Mandelstam as an eccentric, birdlike creature which has become a fixed element of émigré reminiscences of the poet. Particularly effective is the evocation of the atmosphere of literary ferment in Russia in the decade preceding the revolution. The biographical account ends in the year 1928 when the last collection of poetry published under Mandelstam's supervision appeared. Major events of the last decade of his life are merely outlined; the interested reader will seek out *Hope Against Hope*, which is clearly what Brown desires.

The analytical section of *Mandelstam* is limited to the poetry published before 1928—the only works for which relatively reliable versions exist. (The fascinating description of the variant readings of "A wandering fire at a terrible height" illustrates the enormous obstacles to establishing an authoritative edition of the published works, let alone the handwritten manuscripts of the later poems which were preserved by Mandelstam's widow and a handful of faithful friends.) This second section includes a cogent exposition of Mandelstam's relation to Acmeism and illuminating discussion of the architectural and classical motifs in his poetry. Brown is particularly adept at demonstrating interconnections among clusters of poems, the recurrence of images and allusions, the frequent necessity of reading certain poems in connection with their near relatives. He insists on the reality of what he rather clumsily labels the "drift" of a cycle of poems and is not afraid to lay himself open to charges of subjectivity and impressionism. His occasionally argumentative manner of marshaling his proofs is an incitement to the reader to do battle with him, and this, of course, is all to the good.

In contrast to the biography, *Selected Poems* is wisely weighted in favor of

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the late Mandelstam. The early poetry, particularly the works selected from *Stone* and *Tristia,* is not translated as well as the later works. The themes are transmitted, of course; the imagery is closely approximated; but somehow Merwin has not found a voice whose resonance fairly represents Mandelstam's. Inevitably, the translations do not mirror ambiguities permitted by Russian syntax nor the links between images which spring from chance verbal similarities. Rhyme patterns are ignored. Merwin, while echoing Mandelstam, remains true to himself. His method is most effective in the post-1921 poems. In these later works Merwin's dry, taut lines merge with Mandelstam's ominous subject matter to produce such painfully beautiful English poems as "The Age," "1 January 1924," "The apartment's dumb as paper," "You're still alive, you're not alone yet." Merwin may not be the ideal interpreter of Mandelstam but he has become, with Brown's collaboration, the best we have in English.

Madeline G. Levine

THE FRANKFURT MYTH AND ITS HISTORY

THE DIALECTICAL IMAGINATION. A HISTORY OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL AND THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH, 1923-1950. By Martin Jay. Little, Brown and Company. $3.95.

Critically read, Martin Jay's history of the personal and theoretical development of the Institut for Social Research (the so-called "Frankfurt School" of Critical Theory—words used interchangeably) could help to destroy a myth a-borning. This is not the author's intention, nor really his fault. Insisting that it is a critical study and not a "court history", Jay's book brilliantly and cogently puts together information on the School gleaned from interviews and private archives of the participants as well as a careful reading of its many-faceted production. He parades before our eyes the intellectual, and some of the political history of the past half-century. The most unexpected people pop up in the orbit of the Institut, whose members, associates or authors ranged from future spy Richard Sorge to Raymond Aron and K. A. Wittfogel, and included such contemporary luminaries as Paul Baran, Bruno Bettelheim, M. I. Finley, Erich Fromm, Paul Lazarsfeld and Benjamin Nelson. From literature to politics, science to philosophy, music to family life, Jay's history is not just that of a doctrine or school, but of an epoch. After an initial history of the School's formation, he presents a chapter devoted mainly to

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Horkheimer's views which, given the "dictatorship of the director", tended to set the thematic attitudes of the Institut. This is followed by a synthetic knitting together of the various member's contributions to: "The Integration of Psychoanalysis," the "First Studies in Authority," "The Institut's Analysis of Nazism," "Aesthetic Theory and the Critique of Mass Culture," "The Empirical Work of the Institut in the 1940's," and a tentative "Philosophy of History: The Critique of the Enlightenment." Jay's "Epilogue" discusses briefly the return to Germany, and touches lightly on some of the problems of Critical Theory as they materialized in its practice after the return.

The financial independence, interdisciplinary and problem-oriented approach of the Institut made the pages of its publications rich reading in their time. The critical analysis and re-membering of such theoretical vogues as Lebensphilosophie, Bergson and Dilthy, Existentialism and Vienna School positivism is often brilliant. Horkheimer and Marcuse particularly excelled at setting the History of Ideas into its socio-political content in order to detect the changing functions of a school of thought. The early recognition of the role of the family as a mediation between individual psychology and socio-political phenomena which led to the attempt to study it empirically, from the standpoint of the history of ideas, and within the context of a—for the time, shockingly original—combination of Marx and Freud, stands as a monument to the School's perceptiveness. Sensitivity to the changing function of the economic in the establishment of socially accepted forms of domination provided new insights into mass culture and democratic diffusion in the technological civilization of modern bureaucratic capitalism. The empirical studies of authority and prejudice, and the attempt to take seriously the methodology of the objectivating (i.e., "hard") sciences within the context of a theory which also attempted to explain the theoretical and human implications of such a scientific approach serves as a caution against a certain romanticism as well as an emotionless empiricism. And the generally preferred aphoristic style is a continual temptation to reflect, and thus to act; the rejection of a didactic exposition permits the angularity of the theory's openness to live on where, in the last analysis, its content and insights laid out in linear-biographical form appear dated.

The first myth that Jay unintentionally debunks is that of a "School." When they are grouped under general rubrics, the contributions of the Institut's members sing out their vast differences. At best, there was unity among only Horkheimer and Adorno (who joined the Institut only in 1938, though he wrote for its publications earlier), Pollock and Lowenthal; and the latter two wrote very little, dealing mainly with the management of the Institut and its publications. Though Erich Fromm's early contribution to the study of the family and the integration of Freud was in many ways the most original of its contributions, he had left the Institut by 1939. Walter Benjamin's theoretical

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combination of mysticism, Marxism and a child's attention to details was not integrated, and his political views, especially as influenced by Brecht, were anathema. Franz Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer's analyses of Fascism were radically different from those of Horkheimer and Pollock. Though some economic analysis was present in nearly every issue of the Institut's journal, it was never woven into the theory; such contributors as Wittfogel and Grossmann remained strictly on the periphery. Of the five volumes published in the Institut's *Studies in Prejudice*, only *The Authoritarian Personality* even partially presented the earlier standpoint of Critical Theory; the volume by Bettelheim and Janowitz, for example, came to conclusions diametrically opposed to those of Adorno and his collaborators. Jay notes interestingly that this may be due to the sample population. Adorno et. al. were using a middle-class sample in California while Bettelheim and Janowitz dealt with lower class whites and blacks in Chicago. America's best-known "critical theorist," Herbert Marcuse, though greatly influenced by Horkheimer in his move away from Heideggerian phenomenological-Marxism, had fundamentally different views on such critical issues as the role of labor and alienated labor, the problems of a philosophical identity theory, the place of a philosophical anthropology, and the interpretation of Freud. The later political differences between Marcuse and the other returned Institut members may have its source here, though Jay doesn't take up the question since it goes beyond his self-imposed historical limits.

The second myth is that of the interdisciplinary community of independent scholars whose freedom permits them to pay attention to and integrate the problems of the time. Jay tends to see the School as a model of intellectual and political behavior. Rejecting the politics of the SPD and KPD during the Weimar Republic[1], they were, however, "increasingly forced into a position of 'transcendence' by the withering away of the revolutionary working class." Making a virtue out of necessity, the role given to theory and reason from the outset was ever more stressed and stretched until, in Jay's paraphrase, it became "the only form of *praxis* still open to honest men." This was perhaps not unexpected since, as this study makes clear, the School had never really defined what it meant by *praxis* anyway. The notion behind Critical Theory was that of a radical refusal, the search for the negative that creates the open space in which *praxis* can occur. (Typical of Jay's historical detective work is his note, n122, p. 111, suggesting that Marcuse's "Great Refusal" had its origins in the old Institut slogan "Nicht Mitmachen.") No doubt about it: the conviction that such an open, negative space was necessary led to brilliant critiques of mass culture and modern forms of domination. Typical is Horkheimer's "It is not that chewing gum undermines metaphysics but that it *is* meta-

1. Not all did: in fact Neumann and Kirchheimer had been active in the SPD; Wittfogel, Borkenau and Gumperz in the KPD; and Grossman in the Polish CP.

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physics—this is what must be made clear." Clear they made it; but often only formally clear, and hence open to error. Adorno's sometimes perceptive but generally misunderstanding critique of jazz is but one example: perhaps more portentious was the formal demonstration that fascism is the simple logical continuation of liberal democracy—a demonstration which, in *Dialectic of the Enlightenment,* becomes a formal cosmology of rational domination which is as aphoristically interesting as it is theoretically empty. Formal truths, critical or negative space: these remind one more of Weber than Marx; and they can only lead to a moral call to action.

The inbuilt moralism of the School, which was to become an offended liberalism by the time it left the United States, was rooted in the basic premise of the theory: substantive reason. The term—*Vernunft* (as vs. *Verstand*) in its theoretical usage, *Sittlichkeit* (as vs. *Moralität*) in practical affairs—comes from German Idealism; it is rounded out and adapted by Marx. Yet a reading of the discussions of Hegel that appear in Jay's summary shows only a series of contradictions; and it is not Jay who is responsible for them. Opting now for Kant, now for Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, Hegel is rejected from the standpoint of the integrity of the individual. But then, when it is necessary to present a critique of massified individual in their atomized bourgeois form, Hegel returns as a kind of philosopher of the Polis, in glory. (Marx, interestingly, hardly appears on stage, serving mainly as a foil!) Here, the position of Critical Theory falls apart: To criticize the forms of modern domination it needs the autonomous individual; but since the autonomous individual is the bourgeois who is, finally, responsible for the whole mess, it has to say that the completion of its substantive reason will come in a Beyond which cannot be named or defined without its losing the openness of creativity. This invitation to moralism of course finally became a return to religion in Horkheimer's old age. It is generally responsible for the "politics" of Horkheimer and Adorno vis-à-vis the *praxis* of the German student movement.

Myth number three concerns the political behavior to be adopted by intellectuals in a time of torment. The hopeful openness of an unrealized substantive reason cannot be concretized. This is clear in the ultimate failure of an interdisciplinary approach. Even the partial success of *The Authoritarian Personality* was programmatically vague; it replaced the old goal of revolutionary *praxis* and social change by that of "education", as Jay well notes. Further, Jay points out that the psychological orientation of *The Authoritarian Personality* is at polar opposites to the cosmological, world-historically presentation of the origins of anti-semitism in *Dialectic of the Enlightenment.* Presumably the goal of Critical Theory was to bring together the two approaches in a political theory; such, at least, is the claim of Marxism (as well as of Jürgen Habermas' variety of Critical Theory). The School's inability in this regard seems to me rooted in its fundamental theoretical stance. Jay writes: "Critical

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Theory's holistic, syncretic outlook prevented it from developing a theory of specifically *political* authority. To do so would have implied a fetishization of politics as something apart from the social totality." Yet, the other side of Critical Theory's fundamental stance is expressed in Adorno's famous aphorism: "The whole is the untrue." You can't have it both ways!

Myths two and three appear blatantly and unintentionally in Jay's history, which is a linear succession of ideas and topics strung together loosely by reference to a few catch-ideas. I miss a sense of excitement, a dynamic of interchange and debate, the tension that anyone who has ever chased a thought feels in honing in on the target. Examples: Any group of left-wing intellectuals trying to steer a path between Marxist dogmatism and grey reformism has to be concerned with the evolution of the Russian experiment. Though Pollock wrote his dissertation on Russia, and though the subject came up now and again in the Institut's publications, it seems mainly to have been carefully avoided. Yet how could it have been in those times? How, when members like Grossmann and Wittfogel had sharp opinions on the subject, when the exile community included figures like Bloch, Brecht and Korsch, who had more than a word to say on the matter? There was also the question of Fascism. Jay's description shows the vital and fundamental difference between the analyses of, e.g., Neumann, Kirchheimer and Gurland and those of Horkheimer and Pollock. Where the former stressed the economic role of monopoloy capital, and posed the question of "politics in command," the latter were concerned with the more formal—and everyday—experience of domination. The two are not brought together, nor do they seem to have clashed fruitfully. Similarly, the Institut published Mirra Komarovsky's *The Unemployed Man and His Family* (1940) which concluded that the demise of the family was a positive force—precisely the opposite view of Horkheimer. Again, one gets no sense that a debate occurred. Further, living in another and newer form of social domination, the New Deal, and profoundly affected by their American experience, as Jay shows, no analysis seems even to have been attempted. The term "New Deal" doesn't even figure in Jay's index!

When they returned to the newly created Federal Republic of Germany, the prestige of Horkheimer and Adorno loomed large. Their writings seemed to be a source of radicalization for many who saw through the "economic miracle." While Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* did not create the Movement in the U.S.A., the Critical Theorists back in Frankfurt *did* make an essential contribution to its German counterpart. But, I would argue, they did so as a kind of myth. The theoretical and practical critique of the forms of domination in everyday life that began with the rejection of the SPO's Bad Godesberg Program is a heritage of the Institut. A heritage that the fathers rejected, and a heritage which, paradoxically, as in Mallarmé's *Igitur,* permits the children to create the parents! Jay cites Adorno, who called the police to disperse a student

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demonstration shortly before his death, as stating that "When I made my theoretical model, I could not have guessed that people would try to realize it with Molotov cocktails." Given the myths to which I have pointed, this is not surprising.

Jay's book is not a critical account of the School's theory or its practice. It is, however, a mine of information and a valiant and often successful attempt to pull together the diverse strands of an often insightful intellectual endeavor. That the strands don't form a coherent tableau, and that the tension of the artist is lost, is not his fault. The Frankfurt School's adaptation of Critical Theory seems to me, in the last analysis, not at all a "theory" but rather the aphoristic, humane and often penetrating insight of aesthetically sensitive persons. At its best, it shoots directly home to the flesh, opens doors and poses a challenge. Leafing through my underlines in Jay's book is something I will do again, often.

Dick Howard

WOMEN BEWARE WOMEN

CALL ME ISHTAR. By Rhoda Lerman. Doubleday. $6.95.

SMALL CHANGES. By Marge Piercy. Doubleday. $8.95.

ADVANCING PAUL NEWMAN. By Eleanor Bergstein. Viking. $7.95.

"Women's fiction" used to mean the soft and sticky fantasies of love and domestic power out of which Richardson invented the novel and which Joyce raised to excruciating clarity in the person of poor Gerty MacDowell. I don't think women should be particularly embarrassed about this—the dry and lumpy stuff of "men's fiction," with *its* fantasies of love and power, is certainly no more distinguished, and the great novelists, male or female, are more like Gerty MacDowell than James Bond or Tarzan. But the tradition I'm thinking about obviously reflects a social, political and sexual subordination of women that's no longer much of a secret, and I don't wonder that women writers are looking for other ways of doing things.

Yet feminine self-consciousness remains in an undeservedly difficult situation. Good writing comes out of an engagement with something that one knows, while trying not to give the impression that it's *all* one knows. Our cultural arrangements, however challenged these days, still ensure that most

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intelligent and morally curious women are allowed only a relatively small range of opportunities for experience, and hence for writing fiction about how women live.

This limiting of possibilities struck me painfully when I noticed that both Marge Piercy and Eleanor Bergstein, who don't otherwise seem to have much in common besides being writers and women, have put episodes in their recent novels that are strikingly similar. One of their heroines (each book has two), a girl who's big and sexy and Jewish and in or just out of college, relinquishes her virginity after being picked up in the Museum of Modern Art by what turns out to be Mr. Wrong (in each case a writer), who carries her up to his place for a splendid lay. No doubt that stimulating institution does preside over such liasons, and the irony of first love being a (fallible) form of aesthetic education works well in both books; but "women's fiction" of the old school seems somehow close by, and it's sad that a trivial coincidence should seem to say so much about what even tough and sophisticated women writers have to work with.

One way of dealing with such limitations, of course, is to accept them and give them the imaginative works, as Rhoda Lerman does in *Call Me Ishtar.* Here the small and seemingly hopeless details of Middle American housewifery get infused with wild strains of myth, as the archetypal mother—call her Ishtar or Astarte or Aphrodite or Arianrhod or whatever else Robert Graves or Norman O. Brown may suggest—descends into the fallen world of rational male order somewhere around Syracuse, New York, in the incarnate form of a sexy, Jewish (see above) homemaker:

> My nipples are antennas, grossly exaggerated in the curved reflection of the Sunbeam toaster. They will understand when the toast should pop and will warn me before it burns. Robert, watching the stainless steel nipples, forgets that his juice is freshly squeezed and swallows the pulpy clots, coughing them into his napkin. I smile secretly. He has not yet put down his paper. He is now reading the financial section. Before while I spoke to him of Cupcakes and factories and an entire civilization living on the chocolate and mandrake roots of my Hostess Cupcakes, and like happiness, being sold on every street corner of America, of the world and the mothers of the boys operating the factories while Robert sits far above them all, overseeing and designing new ovens and machines and checking quality control, he suddenly laughed between my words. He was reading Dagwood Bumstead. I continued to spin my dreams of edible records, of spruce beer and pears and happiness and wealth enough for the boys' contentment and his own peace, of peace between man and woman, of wholeness for everyone and of a connection again to the powers of heaven. He laughed. But what can I expect of him. He went to the bookstore to buy a copy of *Intelligent Life in the Universe* and when he arrived, forgot the title.

I don't know whether Ishtar or Lerman here forgets that the title of that comic strip is really "Blondie," but it's amusing enough to watch Dagwood Bum-

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stead reading Dagwood Bumstead oblivious to a wife who has feathers instead of pubic hair.

Some of the fun, however, seems pretty special and labored. The Hostess Cupcakes business keeps coming up, as Ishtar goes about putting her own special recipe for them (Twinkies too) into mass production, and this remains baffling until she spells it out to the youthful audience at a rock show:

> "Listen not to their tales of original sin. The church hangs you up and shakes you down as they did me from the Tree of Life, for I am the apple and it is I that must be eaten for knowledge and joy. But they rip you off too. Sign nothing. Promise nothing. Don't sell your soul for their redemption. You have no sin. Remember the Hostess. Jesus is bad hash. Partake of me."

There are too many such tricks in Lerman's way of connecting heaven and earth to the detriment of unalterable law, man-style. Ishtar's housewife-self is married to Robert, a plastics manufacturer whose secret name, she divines, is Moses, one of her old enemies; and this joke, like others, gets played out in endless variations, from driving on the Robert Moses Power Access Highway on page one to Ishtar's farewell to "my ex-Chairman of Parks and Paradise" at the end.

Sometimes one enjoys the ingenuities, as when Ishtar's fond memory of her recreation of the world after the Deluge, coupling with Noah on Ararat to the music of "By the Time I get to Phoenix," leads many pages later to:

> Luck, who not only is a Lady, but is from the same source word as logos, lucifer and means wisdom, light, power, might bring me a Phoenix flapping against my Spanish ceiling beams. Phoenix, by the way, originates from the same source as Venus, Penis, Phoenicia, and Phoenicia is the place where circumcision was first, according to your histories, practiced in my honor.

But there's something rather desperate about the continual invocation of the myth of primal feminine power. If Lerman's handling of it is mostly pretty good-natured and often quite funny, still it keeps pushing the book up against a seriousness that it can't quite accommodate.

> The Angel of Death, the Whore of Babylon, the Mother of the World, we must be all these things, Claire, all at once. That woman you have on your coins with the balanced scales? She is not Justice. She is woman balancing her roles. Standing on one foot, blindfolded. Half queen, half whore, half goddess, half kitchen help. "Cunt, my dear fornicating child," I tell Claire as we drive to Rochester, with Grace and her friend behind us in their aprons under their pastel mink-collared coats and their Dynel wigs.
>
> *"Cunt, my sweet child, is from the Sumerian word cunnus. It means Burden. It is not something to be treated lightly. . . ."*

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But for Lerman it is also not something to be treated heavily, either; big guns roll up only to fire off cupcakes, the kidder and the suffragette keep elbowing each other aside.

Call Me Ishtar reflects a sense of what could fairly be called oppression, a sense Lerman obviously shares with many other women. But I think that women face a special difficulty in expressing this sense, one that black writers, for example, may not face. Lerman's book reminds me interestingly of Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo,* which also relates the culture of an oppressed group to a body of lore drawn from mythography and comparative religion and in which the myths invoked unexpectedly make more sense than the satiric occasion requires. But if women are an oppressed group, they are not an oppressed *minority* group; in practical terms, at least, they have less to gain and more to lose than blacks do, and a sense of qualified oppression can create imaginative uneasiness. Where Reed uses his mythic materials with a fine, incisive arrogance, Lerman seems a little nervous, unsure about what's "serious" and what isn't where Reed doesn't bother to discriminate, over-anxious to make something, preferably something dignifying, of the housewife's lot.

Virginia Woolf once remarked that "when a woman speaks to women she should have something very unpleasant up her sleeve." Rhoda Lerman finally doesn't, I think, but Marge Piercy makes up for her. Though she contributes to *Call Me Ishtar* an approving dust-jacket blurb about "the emergence of a conscious and fully developed women's culture," Piercy has a harder message for women, and for men too. Though *Small Changes* begins in Lerman country, with the marriage in Syracuse of Beth, blue-collar child vaguely yearning for something more than she has known, to Jim, a bundle of sexist fixations on sports, cars, TV, home cooking and getting children, it's a grindingly circumstantial demonstration that the task for women isn't to make something of the domestic life but to discredit and escape it.

Beth, uneducated but capable of serious self-imaginings, runs away to Boston, gets a secretarial job at M.I.T., and gingerly explores the marginal area between the graduate-student culture and the bohemia of street life; gradually she learns that what she wants—separateness, the right to determine her own desires, a room of one's own—is as hard to find there as it was back home. Her life gets entangled with that of Miriam, who looks more like a fictional winner—she's a "big flamboyant" girl, sensual, out-going, brilliant at computer science, seemingly liberated to start with. But Miriam can't stop equating "reality" with being wanted by a man; she moves through intense and wearing relationships with two sexually challenging but humanly closed-in Vietnam veterans (who, Piercy suggests, have a subconscious homosexual thing going between them), emerging into a relatively conventional suburban marriage to a young scientist whose good nature is weaker than his male chauvinism; at the end he is drifting into an affair with his secretary while Miriam copes with

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the kids and enters psychotherapy. And, as Miriam goes under, Beth breaks out into commune life, lesbianism and political resistance, achieving a tentative but rewarding security living in Cleveland under an assumed name with her dancer-organizer friend and the latter's children.

None of this is much fun to follow, partly because Piercy's people lead hard and unhappy lives, which is fair enough, but partly because she's determined to have her characters articulate their every motive in long, serious, searching talks about themselves and their problems:

> "I don't want to be poor, if the truth be known. I want to live comfortably. I'm tired of the half-life of a student. I want to be able to help my friends when they need help. I want to buy interesting clothes. I'm sick of eating in greasy spoons. I don't want a lot of money, Allegra, really. I just want a decent living. I want the things that make life pleasant. When I bought that reconditioned air conditioner for fifty dollars, do you know what a change that made in my life? This room gets hot in the summer, believe me, right up under the roof. I had enough hard times growing up."

This is Miriam, and the passage is diagrammatically right—her wants, none of them unreasonable alone, yet point toward the compromise with social comforts that finally undoes her. But the voice is too flat and sketchy, the mind behind it incompletely imagined; conversation in the book is a vehicle for debate about "life," not the dramatic record of conflicting feelings; everyone listens and replies to everyone else, people always say what they mean, and I suppose that Piercy would think it illegitimate authorial intrusion to allow into such a passage the little inadvertent, only partly conscious, nearly irrelevant private quirks of speech that could have turned it into a Chekhovian aria of self-revelation.

The virtue of Piercy's method is that it's consistently compassionate and fair to the novel's people, all of whom get room to work out their own terms for themselves. But the method also suggests a suspicion of words, a fear that most of what really matters will get messed up if anything more than the simplest operations of language (which are also the longest and most tedious) are performed. Phil, Miriam's first love, embittered by public and private disaster, turns from poetry to furniture making, with the author's apparent blessing, and Miriam herself comes as close as she ever gets to an adequate occupation when she and Phil set up as bakers of homemade bread for the local trade. Though Piercy never overtly endorses this familiar and sadly innocent insistence that life is simpler and better than our ways of describing it, the book adds up to something close to endorsement.

The practical equivalent to a wordless life would I suppose be a life wholly outside the deceptive complications of the normative social, political and familial vocabularies, some "countercultural" existence of the sort that Miriam loses and Beth precariously finds; only there can women, and men too,

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achieve an authentic selfhood. Perhaps so; but the idea has its serious difficulties, and Piercy's nominal withholding of judgment doesn't convince me that the book has considered these with enough skepticism. Here is Beth thinking about her life in a New Hampshire commune:

> The men there were the first men Beth had been real friends with. Everyone in that house had been through a year and a half of fighting their old attitudes and consciously trying to play equal and looser roles. Men who had been involved in such a struggle were different in obvious and subtle ways. They had different manners and different anxieties. In gross ways the house was unlike other communes; the men cooked too and the women also chopped wood and the men took care of the children and the women climbed up on ladders and worked side by side repairing the roof. One of the men, Alan, did needlepoint for pleasure. He was also accurate with a rifle.

The tone of rather naive surprise is undoubtedly Beth's alone, but I can only suppose that at some level Piercy shares her pleasure in the image of a life in which people are emerging from culturally-imposed sexual roles. I can share that pleasure myself, but only while remembering that images aren't literal cases and wishing that this particular one weren't so tidy, that Alan *wasn't* also accurate with a rifle, that more weight could be given to "consciously trying to play." Marge Piercy is an admirably intelligent and serious writer, but the exploration and analysis of "roles" may lead to the erosion of "character," to the fictional obscuring of just that personal freedom her characters so badly want to achieve. *Small Changes* tends to reduce its characters to the social and political terms they are meant to enact; and while this, it could be argued, is a necessary stage in the revolution of consciousness the book hopes to contribute to, it seems in the short run at least an ambiguous artistic and human achievement.

Where Lerman and Piercy are in some sense (though not a derogatory one) provincial novelists, both geographically and culturally, Eleanor Bergstein is visibly a cosmopolitan one. She assumes a common fund of experience and outlook in her readers, a sense of contemporary life founded on a "moral" commitment to politics and a sophisticated relation to informational media, a readiness for certain kinds of jokes, for example, that I fear I myself am only too ready for:

> When she started to feel better she bought a lavender tweed coat with frog closings, and was taken around the city [Hong Kong] by the guide who had taken around Liz Taylor and Mike Todd. "She beautiful," he said, "and he say to me 'Tommy you smaht boy I want you Carifoonia' and she say 'what is this clap?' and he say 'shut up you dum blawd' and she cly."

I'm not particularly anxious to examine my amusement at this, which must draw upon racial condescensions and the mixture of desire and malice any media-voyeur feels; but Bergstein knows that readers like me are out there ready to take such bait, and she plays us with considerable skill.

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Advancing Paul Newman looks back from the McCarthy campaign of 1968 to the lives of Ila Rappaport and Kitsy Frank, who met as college girls in Europe in the summer of 1959 and remained best friends through the following decade. The book's design is elaborately cinematic, cutting regularly between campaign incidents and earlier events in the girls' lives, so that the past moves toward us even as the narrative present advances more slowly, with the assassination of Robert Kennedy and the death of Kitsy's husband in Vietnam marking the eventual coinciding of the two time tracks. The ingenuity of this feels rather mechanical for a while, but gradually one accepts it as a metaphor for the sense of history the novel intends. We do remember our lives as if they were old movies, and it can be shocking to discover, as do Ila and Kitsy, that ourselves watching the movie is part of the movie, that we remember not from outside our lives but from inside them, still there as a potential terminus for actions that are yet to be completed.

And the structure draws upon our understanding that we live in and through media more largely than it's altogether comfortable to recognize. The girls enter the adult world as bright college girls (and boys) used to do frequently, working at a succession of jobs in publishing, educational television, film agencies, promotion of various sorts. The book's catchy title—Ila and Kitsy work with an advance team for McCarthy's appearances in California that for a memorable few days includes Paul Newman himself—puts the irony forward. The actor is more vividly and compellingly real than the politician who's nominally the center of it all. History is a promotion itself, a media event, so that for most of us the '60's are framed between seeing (say) the Beatles' first performance on the Ed Sullivan Show and Johnson's abdication speech. "What happened" is reduced to recalling where we were and how we felt when a given newness, usually horrifying, appeared on the tube.

As public and private events blur together and become almost indistinguishable from invented commercial-aesthetic events, it gets very hard to be oneself. Ila and Kitsy first made connection by discovering that they liked and could quote from the same World War II movies (they'd of course missed the war itself); and when Kitsy finally has to grieve for her dead husband she's hard put to it to find an adequately personal way:

> I won't think you're brave I won't think you're smart I'll hate you I'll scream fool fool—would he have fought for himself? got killed in three days—hero starr louis starr mrs starr—cheering—leader—music swells, oh louis—grenade in a ditch gonna kill gooks—john wayne idiot arching back like paul muni in norway bleeding like gone with the wind anatole kuragin without a leg john lennon red-crotched and comforting woman's face seamed with tenderness comes over the hill—it'll be all right dear it'll be all right.

This difficulty is hardly peculiar to women, and the impressive thing about *Advancing Paul Newman* is that Bergstein, while giving us Ila and

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Kitsy's experience as the experience of particular women (here Kitsy confusedly trying to identify with a feminine image from a decidedly masculine movie, *How I Won the War*), also transcends sexual categories. Ila and Kitsy *are* women, just as they are privileged, well-educated, upper-middle class, Jewish, New Yorkers; but in presenting their histories Bergstein shows all of us how much we've had to endure and how little of ourselves we've had available for the task.

It's a curious though hardly decisive fact that all three of these novels have a dual protagonist—in Lerman, Ishtar's double identity as housewife and deity, in Piercy and Bergstein literally two heroines whose fates are different. Maybe this schizoid habit marks a fairly early stage in the emergence of a new feminine consciousness, as if women writers were not quite ready to project their sense of their condition into a single, unequivocal fictional counterpart who could risk failure, or for that matter success, without having a stand-by self ready to bear some of the possibilities. "Woman balancing her roles," as Lerman says, is a figure of affecting difficulty, to be watched with sympathy and hope. (Can a man say that without sounding patronizing?) But in the long run, I think the goal may not be a new "woman's fiction" as such but a fiction that can represent the lives of women as part of the general life of people. This would require women writers to write as well about *men* as George Eliot or (at her best) Virginia Woolf did, as well as a few men writers like Richardson and James and (at his best) Lawrence have written about women. However imperative it now is for women to learn to understand, accept and trust their identities as women, this (as they surely know too) will get them only half-way along the journey, though that's at least as far as men have got, and with a head start.

Thomas R. Edwards

THE TWO FACES OF DOS PASSOS

THE FOURTEENTH CHRONICLE. Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos. Edited by Townsend Ludington. Gambit. $15.00.

In his preface to *The Fourteenth Chronicle* Townsend Ludington remarks that "these letters and diaries should enhance Dos Passos' reputation." I hope he is right. Dos Passos's reputation has declined, to put it mildly, since in 1939 he published *Adventures of a Young Man.* This novel made perhaps excessively clear, and to its detriment as a novel, that its author, the

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prominent member of the Sacco and Vanzetti Defense Committee and of Dreiser's National Committee to Aid Striking Miners Fighting Starvation, the staff writer for the *New Masses* and the New Playwrights Theatre, the contributor to the *Daily Worker* and other left-wing publications, the champion of the I.W.W. who once described himself as "red, radical, and revolutionary," had developed a dislike for Communism as intense as his dislike for Fascism. The ground was the same—the necessity of preserving or extending individual freedom; and that necessity remained the ground of Dos Passos's political writings, even during the last few years of his life, when he had moved far to the Right and was writing for the *National Review*. His reputation has so declined since 1939 that one recalls with surprise how only two years earlier Dos Passos had published the last volume of *U.S.A.*, which if it is considered as a single work is probably one of the dozen or so best novels written by an American in this century up to that time, a novel that would do a number of our young writers much good to discover. Had Dos Passos died in 1950 we might consider him an American version of George Orwell. In many crucial respects, but not in respect of the honor paid to him by his countrymen, his relation to American letters was like Orwell's to English letters.

He was like Orwell during his best years in that he strove toward a prose washed clean of personality, sifted of everything but its subject—and, perhaps, the grain of national idiom. He was like Orwell in having a genius for prose so pure that his many attempts at poetry remained obstinately prosaic, although he was unlike Orwell in knowing as much:

> *My verse is no upholstered chariot,*
> *Gliding oil-smooth on oiled wheels.*
> *No swift and shining limousine*
> *But a pushcart, rather. . . .*

He was like Orwell in his impatience with "esthetes littérateurs poet-taster–genteel dog-, picture-, life-fanciers," with those who made a career of expressing "a vague dissent from the inelegance of life today," with writers who strained to produce only "a talented and daintily-scented turd." He was like Orwell in having lived among the down and out and like him in the reflections that accompanied his menial labors—"As I swept I kept whispering to myself, 'organization is death.' " He was like Orwell in his reaction to the Spanish civil war, in his claim that the Communists had betrayed their allies, in his patriotic attempt during the Second World War to unearth the roots of his own national institutions, in his sharpening hatred for totalitarianism, religious or political, from the left or from the right, in his conclusion that "the one hope for the future of the type of western civilization which furnishes the frame of our lives is that the system of popular government based on individual liberty be not allowed to break down." He was like Orwell in that his

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writing was always in some sense political, his best writing at once realistic and satirical, if not exactly funny. If his political intelligence was never as precise as Orwell's, not even before World War II, it was also never made to perform strange tricks by its owner's guilt over having been born into the middle class. Even in 1930 Dos Passos could admit that he was "a middle-class liberal, whether I like it or not." But unlike Orwell, he did not die in 1950. The last letter in *The Fourteenth Chronicle* is one recommending William Buckley to the Century Association. Orwell would have seen through that sneering toad immediately, as would a younger Dos Passos, who had satirized a number of equivalent types on the left, and who wrote that "undoubtedly the worst abomination and the commonest is snobbery."

Even if *The Fourteenth Chronicle* should not enhance Dos Passos's reputation, it is a good book to have around. It is excellently edited; and its eight sections of letters and extracts from diaries, along with Ludington's biographical introductions to the sections, provide the fullest account we have of Dos Passos's life, his development as a writer, his feelings about the United States, his shifting political commitments.

He was born in 1896, fourteen years before his parents were able to marry. His father, lawyer, self-made man, friend to McKinley, expert on brokerage law and advisor to the great trusts, was married to a woman whom Ludington describes as mentally ill; divorce was not possible. By the time his father was free to marry his mother, the latter had been invalided by heart disease. Although the bonds of affection between the three of them seem to have been remarkably strong, they were never able to have much of a life together. Before his mother became an invalid, Dos Passos and his parents had traveled a good deal in Europe, where they could all appear together openly. It was "a hotel childhood," as Dos Passos put it later. He was educated in boarding schools and by tutors, abroad and in the States. Wherever he was, he seemed foreign to his schoolmates. He was shy, awkward, and nearsighted. His hotel childhood left him with an incurable sense of loneliness, a compulsion to travel, and an addiction to literature—"was ever a creature more dependent on literature for life and stimulus—God—I must be either on the move externally or internally via literature."

His loneliness was more often a condition of his character than of his circumstances. At the age of twenty he wrote to a friend that he had found it "hard to shake the habit of solitude," that "there are people who sort of have solitude in their blood, who are just as lonely in a crowd or on a mountain top." At the age of sixty-three, married to a "cordial" wife, father to a well-loved daughter, much sought after for his journalism, he was still describing himself as "a borderer, a dweller in no man's realm." Even during his days of close alliance and daily contact with political organizations and literary crowds his ticklish refusal to immerse himself in any set of ideas or people kept him as much outside as inside whatever his circumstances. Although he some-

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times complained that he was "sick of dangling on the margin of life," he also seemed to realize from time to time the advantages to his writing of living on the margin. In his memoir, *The Best Times,* he wrote, "I could never convince myself enough as to the rightness of my own opinions properly to take out after my enemies." And for most of his life he could never convince himself enough as to the rightness of his friends' opinions to lose the perspective that his distance provided and his novels required.

His compulsions to travel, his "fits of crazy restlessness," were as unconditioned by anything outside himself as was his solitude (and as useful to his writing). He was always on the move and so are most of his characters. He never managed a fully developed sense of self—which is one source of his accuracy as an observer; what he observed rushed into his consciousness unchecked by those barriers a prosperous ego erects to protect its holdings—but he seems to have been most vivid to himself when between one place and the other he would soon pass through: "A man is never more his single separate self than when he sets out on a journey. A man is his own on the road." Wherever he went he tried to learn the language and to read the literature. Besides Latin and Greek, he knew German, Italian, French, and Spanish; he struggled with Russian, Arabic, and Portuguese— "I've always been mad to know a lot of languages—It's so humanizing don't you think," he wrote to a friend when he was a student at Harvard. And wherever he went he headed straight for the big city or for the big action. He lived amid wars, riots, and revolutions in Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, the Caucasus, Mexico, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands. As Robert Gorham Davis has observed, "he took more chances in more unlikely places than even Hemingway." In the long run, however, his experiences with unlikely places and unlikely languages only sharpened his sense of American places and "the American lingo."

His unconditioned solitude, his undernourished and avid ego, his need to keep on the move, all come together in the classic moment of Dos Passos's fiction: a young man, lonely and unnoticed, walks through a city taking in all that he is separated from by his solitude.* Here is a passage from a letter he wrote at age twenty-three:

> Am wandering about the Boulevards in one of those moods of isolation where I seem utterly left out of a gaudy stream of life that throbs and thunders about my ears with a sound of kisses and fighting, a tenseness of muscles taut with love and hate.

Here is the opening paragraph of *U.S.A.:*

*In The Camera Eye #47 of *U.S.A.* he describes himself in this way:

an unidentified stranger
destination unknown
hat pulled down over the has he any? face

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> The young man walks fast by himself through the crowd that thins into the night streets; feet are tired from hours of walking; eyes greedy for warm curve of faces, answering flicker of eyes, the set of a head, the lift of a shoulder, the way hands spread and clutch; blood tingles with wants; mind is a beehive of hopes buzzing and stinging; muscles ache for knowledge of jobs, for the roadmender's pick and shovelwork, the fisherman's knack with a hook when he hauls on the slithery net from the rail of the lurching trawler, the swing of bridgeman's arm as he slings down the whitehot rivet, the engineer's slow grip wise on the throttle, the dirt-farmer's use of his whole body when, whoaing the mules, he yanks the plow from the furrow. The young man walks by himself searching through the crowd with greedy eyes, greedy ears taut to hear, by himself, alone.

There is something beyond observation in this passage, something beyond mere imaginative participation: the young man's body is involved. His muscles ache for the knowledge he proves he has by the detail work in the list of what they ache for. He becomes what he sees, what he yearns for, what he is not, as Whitman, the father of such passages, claimed he did. Once again, and once again like Whitman, he is in and out of the game.

And as one might expect, Dos Passos read books as he wrote them and as he walked through cities—with a yearning so intense it becomes its object. At nineteen he wrote a friend that for him reading was "like diving out of everything bothersome and plunging in a new comforting world where you have adventures and drink canary sack, and live a dozen people's lives instead of your own puny one. It must be like that to write books, only nicer." In one marvelous passage from his diary, Dos Passos's writing reveals how vividly he lived a dozen lives while reading the *Decameron,* every sense open and greedy:

> Boccaccio—I've just finished the fifth day—It is wonderful what a picture he gives you of his time, of the life of the merchants riding forth from the walled towns of Italy, of sea travel with its amusing interludes of Barbary pirates—of the cultured, Saracen-leaning courts of Frederick, and the Rogers in South Italy—heat and gardens and flowers, and lovely women in Kiosks—escaping through shuttered windows into the silk clad arms of their lovers while the shutter creaks in the scented night breeze and there comes on the wind a sound of breakers—a swift galley is waiting on the shore and the lovers lie naked in each others arms on piles of carpets in the stern, cooled by the faint spray borne on the hot breathing night wind—and the rowers row towards a dark orient city where they will land in pomp and all magnificence, and wander and lose themselves in strange streets, full of throat gripping odors, pale scents of flowers, cloying incense smoke and smell of secret lives behind latticed balconies—There they will have strange adventures with robbers and princes—and return in the end to silken ease on some distant islands where they pass their last contented years to the sound of flutes and fountains, or else come to violent gorgeous deaths, by flames or stabbing with an emerald handled dagger—

In pursuit of such gorgeous lives and deaths, Dos Passos read and read. As Thomas R. Edwards puts it, the letters "reflect a range of reading that, except for Joyce, may be unmatched among novelists of this century." At Harvard he

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became something of an authority on the culture of modernism, as much from his friends among the brilliant group of writers who went to Harvard just before World War I as from his reading. He also picked up a few aestheticist affectations—"The odor of lavender from the garden is simply maddening." But the slogans in his letters are more often ones like "Originality before everything else" and "You always have to look out for wornout words." From Edward Nagel and E. E. Cummings he learned that "in the arts everything was abolished. Everything must be reinvented from scratch." Especially everything American was abolished, or about to be. On the day in October 1916 that he sailed for France, where in a few months he would join the Norton-Harjes volunteer ambulance unit, his first publication for money came out, an essay entitled "Against American Literature."

His experiences during the war stripped away his last gauds of aestheticism. "The night I particularly remember it was my job to carry off buckets full of amputated arms and hands and legs from an operating room." He became "absorbed in the problem of how to write clearly," rather than in the problem of how to write beautifully. He began to read his beloved Flaubert in a new way. "I caught his obsession for the *mot juste*," he tells us in *The Best Times*. But in the very next paragraph Dos Passos also tells us that "I was in a passion to put down everything, immediately it happened, exactly as I saw it." The exact word, however, is seldom the immediate word, and it took Dos Passos some time to learn how to put down what he really was looking for, the American word, "good Yankee dialect."

It was only while Dos Passos was writing *U.S.A.*, betweeen 1930 and 1938, that he discovered his proper subject in the "native lingo," the American word. In a letter of 1936 to Edmund Wilson he made a kind of minimum claim for the writer's work: "It sure does pay to put down what happens just as it does happen—I'm not at all sure that it isn't all anybody can do of any permanent use in a literary way." And in a letter to Robert Cantwell from a year earlier he had written, "I can't think of good writing in any other way than as reality, though I'd hate to define what I mean by the term." Good writing, in short, is not so much a report of reality, as the thing itself, which resides in the spoken word. The spoken word well written preserves the present and shapes the future:

> The mind of a generation is its speech. A writer makes aspects of that speech permanent by putting them in print. He whittles at the words and phrases of today and makes forms for the minds of later generations. That's history. A writer who writes straight is an architect of history.

So Dos Passos wrote in "The Workman and His Tools," an essay of 1936. Two years later, in a preface written especially for the publication in a single volume of the three novels that make up *U.S.A.*, he recorded his final full awareness of what reality it is that an American writer puts down to be of

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permanent use, to become an architect of history. The turn in the preface coincides with the young man's discovery that "only the ears busy to catch the speech are not alone." He sums up three paragraphs of instances with the remark that "it was the speech that clung to the ears, the link that tingled in the blood; U.S.A." The exordium follows. It is made up of a series of sentences beginning "U.S.A. is. . . ." U.S.A. is a slice of continent, a set of bigmouthed officials, the letters at the end of an address when you are away from home. And then the final sentence: "But mostly U.S.A. is the speech of the people." The life of that sentence dances on an initial ambiguity as to whether by "U.S.A." we are to understand a novel or piece of reality; the novel's greatness lies in its making good the claim Dos Passos implies in his triple equation: "U.S.A." is the novel is the speech of the people is the reality of America.

The novel's greatness, in short, lies in a prose that has no character of its own. Dos Passos never developed a personal style that he might apply to every occasion. His style, like his character, was receptive, rather than imposing. The style of the narrative episodes of *U.S.A.* is an Americanese that is silent because it is the modality rather than the content of our speech; its accents from passage to passage are those of whatever events, things, and characters it in one sense preserves and in another sense creates, as it makes us conscious of them. It is nothing in itself, but it becomes precisely whatever it is taking in. Its continuous irony is a product of the continuous disparity between the silence of the modality and the thin, insistent noise of individuality given off in the various accents of events, things, and characters. *U.S.A.* is the speech of people who cannot hear what they are saying. We readers who, like Dos Passos, stand at once in and out of the novel, can hear both the silence and what the events, things, and characters are saying to each other.

In 1937 Dos Passos wrote his "Farewell to Europe," in an article for *Common Sense.* He had just come back from Spain, where what he saw turned him irrevocably against the Communists. He had begun his wanderings twenty years before when upon graduation from Harvard he set off for Spain to study architecture. Within a few months his father died; he joined the Ambulance Unit; immediately after the war he returned to Spain and Portugal. The book he wrote about these travels, *Rosinante to the Road Again,* begins with this sentence: "Telemachus had wandered so far in search of his father he had quite forgotten what he was looking for." Telemachus, the name Dos Passos gave himself in that book, was looking for his father's Latin past in Spain and Portugal and for America's past in Europe. When after twenty years of wanderings, physical and imaginative, Telemachus came home in 1937, he not only found Odysseus, he found that he was Odysseus himself.* His politics and his attitude to America became pretty much those of his father, who had

*For an exposition of this idea, see John H. Wrenn, *John Dos Passos* (New Haven: Twayne Publisher's, 1961), pp. 69-78.

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written *The Anglo-Saxon Century* in praise of native institutions. "An immigrant's son," Dos Passos said of his father, "he cherished the dream of the perfect republic based on Anglo-Saxon tradition of individual liberty with justice for rich and poor." The insider-outsider son became increasingly an insider, a chip off the old block. It was another case of the slow return of the repressed.

Dos Passos's writing after *U.S.A.* illustrates the well-known law to the effect that nothing is worse for an American writer than the resolution of his Oedipus complex. To the extent that Dos Passos became his father he became something less than himself. He becamse more of a personality and less the cinemascopic and finely-focused eye of a camera. Accents began to appear in the prose that were not those of the events, things, and characters the prose was catching up, but those of the personality Dos Passos was becoming. In 1970 he wrote a letter to his daughter reprimanding her for "the rank criminal idiocy of the younger generation" in its opposition to the Cambodian invasion—"President Nixon deserves acclaim instead of obloquy for having had the courage to try it in face of overwhelming Communist-inspired propaganda." (But Dos Passos attaches a characteristic footnote to this uncharacteistically absolute remark—"naturally there is room for rational differences of opinion on the whole subject. I've always wanted the United States to be a neutral country like Switzerland.") Aside from the sentiment, "deserves acclaim instead of obloquy" is the kind of phrase Dos Passos had once reserved for the big-mouthed officials among his characters.

For all that, his later writing is often better than it is made out to be. His memoir, *The Best Times*, published in 1966, is a very good book. Its informing tone is the old shy wistfulness, rather than the new insistence. And even his politics, no matter how conservative they became, were never vicious, self-serving, or inspired by resentment. His mind never became too closed for him to be amazed by "the unbelievable breadth and unexpectedness of things." He never stopped believing that "it's damned remarkable how universally decent people are if you'll only leave them to themselves." He never stopped believing that "everything and everybody's human 'cept the government." There is a line along which certain forms of conservatism and certain forms of populism meet. Dos Passos stepped over that line, but he kept a toe on the terrain he had left behind. My guess is that even at the end of his life he would have agreed with this remark of his middle age: "Most of the time I think the IWW theory was right—Build a new society in the shell of the old—but practically all they did was go to jail." In any case, as he said a number of times, by his "politics" he meant no more than "the art of inducing people to behave in groups with a minimum of force and bloodshed." After he had stepped to the right, as when he had stood on the left, his politics were essentially apolitical.

George Stade

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NEW, NEWER, NEWEST

THE OBSCENE BIRD OF NIGHT. By Jośe Donoso. Translated by Hardie St. Martin and Leonard Mades. Alfred A. Knopf. $7.95.

HEARTBREAK TANGO. By Manuel Puig. Translated by Suzanne Jill Levine. E. P. Dutton. $6.95.

CHILDREN OF THE MIRE. By Octavio Paz. Translated by Rachel Phillips. Harvard University Press.

These three books represent the new novel, the newer novel and the newest novelty, a higher order of criticism, from Latin America. They each come to us with a distinction that is especially remarkable when you consider our insistent ignorance about that continent's writing until just a few years ago. *The Obscene Bird of Night* won the P.E.N. American Center translation prize for 1974, *Heartbreak Tango* was named one of the ten best books of the year by the American Library Association and *Children of the Mire* originated in distinction as the series of Charles Eliot Norton Lectures that Octavio Paz gave at Harvard during 1971-1972. Whatever the relative merit of such honors, and whether or not Latin America is producing "the liveliest literature in the world today," as is sometimes said, these are works by authors who deserve, if nothing more, the label of *master* in the Medieval, guild sense of that word. Perhaps if we can see that rank as the common denominator of the so-called new or Boom literature of Brazil and Spanish America, we will better appreciate its merits than those who praise each new Latin American book as a masterpiece in prejudicial wonder that it exists at all.

The Obscene Bird of Night, Donoso's third novel and the culmination of everything the Chilean author has done so far, is a phantasmagoria chronicling the decay of family, church and social system. What marks it as literature, though, is the brilliant handling of the narration in such a way that the book, like *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* advances "in an opposite direction from reality" and ends up as pages being burned by a hag. The novel comes to its own end, like Garcia Márquez's, as a physical text both *in* the book we are reading and *as* the book we are reading. Throughout, confusions and confluences predominate as the narrator, a deaf mute, records what he hears and writes down what he says in the course of a monstrous, mythic metamorphosis where a legend in the first part becomes the informing reality of the second. Built like a Möbius strip with accounts of the delapidated convent (where the mute lives and eventually transforms himself into a nun and then into an ancient baby) and the estate (where a horrendously misshapen baby is cared for by the mute as he invents a society of cripples, dwarves and

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disfigured people in order to make the child believe he's normal) at the apparent extremes and the myth of the Virgin-witch at the twisting intersection. *The Obscene Bird* is at once a parodic life of Buddah and a modern version of both Dante's *Inferno* and Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*. A popularized surrealism, it might also be seen as *The Childhood of Rosemary's Baby*, but Donoso often brings Gothic fright to the pitch of Lookingglass sublime as when he describes women knitting baby clothes for five years as they wait for a baby to be born who will wear them. Days, months, years wear out their expectations and the clothes dwindle with their hopes until "those clothes became so minuscule . . . that they must be picked up with tweezers and looked at under a magnifying glass to appreciate the fastidious luxury of detail." Donoso's imagination is so proliferating that at times he seems about to deliver a thalidomide novel, but his perpetual transmogrification of characters, events and places into the mute's text, which is the text you read, discovers a dark intelligence, which you may call baroque, as opposed to the transparence of reason. Ultimately, the book is the carrying of an idea to its bewildering conclusion—the text of a text as a text in a text—and the novel is a vast black mass of the written word.

In contrast to this imaginative extravagance, Manuel Puig's *Heartbreak Tango* is a brief, restrained story of a tubercular, small-town gigolo who kills himself with smoking, drinking and sexual excesses and of his ignorant friend who is stabbed to death by a serving girl whom he had impregnated. Where the reader is overwhelmed by Donoso and breathlessly tries to keep up with his nightmarish vision, the reader is exposed to a minimal text in *Tango* which relies on tag lines from Argentine boleros and tangos or from Hollywood films to evoke its intentionally corny world and on documents such as death notices in newspapers, physician's letters and police reports in conjunction with the soft-centered diction of its characters to yield the verbal content of that world. Characteristically, there is almost no narrative as such in Puig's book, save for dead-pan statements or questions which follow or punctuate the characters' mush. The result is a conjunction of easy sentiment ("My obsession, heartbreak tango, plunged my soul to deepest sin") and dry narration ("Saturday, April 18, 1947, at 3:00 P.M., Juan Carlos Jacinto Eusebio Etchepare ceased to exist") as if Puig were matching the Nausicaa episode from *Ulysses* to that of the Ithaca chapter.

Eliminating the non-stop inventiveness that characterizes novels like *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Obscene Bird*, Puig economizes his matter. In Donoso, for example, we are stunned again and again by the evident magic of the work we read; in Puig, as was the intention but so seldom the success of the French new novel, we are gratified by the emotion, even the analysis withheld. Put crudely, the apparent difference between *The Obscene Bird* and *Heartbreak Tango* is that between

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the conventional experience of reading a book where one takes pleasure from the text and that of looking at a scrapbook where one brings satisfaction to the prints. Such is the success of Puig's illusion. His novel, in fact, exists synaptically at the point of contact between the stylized, factual rhetoric of documented bourgeois reality and the sentimental but less stylized rhetoric of the magazine serial or *folletín* which gives *Tango* both its periodic form and the subtitle "A Serial". Not camp, not slush, Puig's novel is a compassionate presentation, thriving on the full irony (unlike Flaubert's bitter mode) that no sides—or both sides—are taken. The product, as with Joyce, is neither slick satire of the characters and their tedious lives and moony language nor any campy elevation of their world. Instead, Puig manages a delicate operation of understanding which leaves the reader both apprised of the smallness of these lives and the bigness of these dreams—small in their typical humanity, big in their universal vulgarity.

New novels or not, Octavio Paz comes to tell us that we are seeing the end of "the idea of modern art." What is really new for us, though, is the beginning of Latin American criticism. We have recognized Borges' essays but not very clearly if we think of them as critical. So Paz's books, which have been appearing here almost monthly, remind us that Latin America has an intellect as well as an imagination. Among his most recent books to be translated—*Early Poems* 1935-1966, *Marcel Duchamp or The Castle of Purity*, *Claude Levi Straus, an Introduction*, *Configurations* (poems) *Eagle or Sun?* (prose, prose poems, poems), *Alternating Current* (prose) *Conjunctions and Disjunctions* (prose; winner of the National Book Award translation prize)—*The Bow and the Lyre* and *Children of the Mire* offer a perfect introduction to the *obra* of Paz. In fact, *Children of the Mire* takes up with the same three questions—"What is a poem? What do poems say? How do poems communicate?"—that Paz's brilliant poetic, *The Bow and the Lyre*, first asked in 1956 and the two books offer an encapsulated history of the development of Paz's thought from predominantly esthetic questions in the earlier book to the more definitely social and political inflection of the latter.

Both evidence the profound influence of Eastern thought on Paz who was the Mexican Ambassador at New Delhi for many years. I don't only mean that his writing is full of allusions to Eastern texts and rectifications of our ways according to Eastern models. Not only that. More important than the way Paz has criticized the West's error of thinking in this-or-that patterns (patterns which result in a misreading of *Heartbreak Tango*) and praised the East's patterns of "this and that" or, better yet, "this is that" is Paz's implementation of those foreign patterns in a rhetoric that produces the same balanced tensions. In other words, Paz has not only got hold of an important subject, he has also developed an idiosyncratic style appropriate to that subject. In short, he is a great writer.

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Paz's preference for the Eastern mode leads him to value the image and symbol as the locus of different things made identical simultaneously. Hence his poetry which culminates in the conjoining polarities, both formal and substantive, of his poem "Blanco." For me, however, Paz's essays are more fulfilling and his argument that modern art is critical and always in search of the "*other*" expresses itself more persuasively and excitingly in his allusively reasoned lectures or in the sparking fragments of works like *Alternating Current*.

If indeed we are at the "twilight of the idea of the future," the avant-garde having lost its powers so that "Negation is no longer creative," Paz's rationale is no dim or feeble swansong. He moves in the vanguard and his writing, rich in learning, startling in insight, controlled in style, worldwide in its reverberations, attacks our preconceptions of the Latin American mind and its verbal mode. Paz shows that our esthetic vocabulary is frequently militaristic (consider "avant-garde" itself) and so we should perhaps ask ourselves, after reading his book, what is the battle and where is it being fought?

These three books are translations and they owe their success in large part to their translators, for of course the recent recognition of Latin American writing in the United States is a function of our excellent translations. Latin American literature is now being translated the world over (and Rachel Phillips is, in fact, not American); but as Julio Cortázar, the Argentine novelist and translator, said at a recent conference—as *The Obscene Bird* and *Heartbreak Tango* themselves demonstrate—the translation of Latin American writing has achieved a new level of excellence and nowhere higher than in our own country.

Ronald Christ

TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT

INEQUALITY: A REASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECT OF FAMILY AND SCHOOLING IN AMERICA. By Christopher Jencks, Marshall Smith, Henry Acland, Mary Jo Bane, David Cohen, Herbert Gintis, Barbara Heyns, and Stephan Michelson. Basic Books. $12.50.

A people tends to distribute its ideological resources in much the same way it distributes other resources. Thus in a society in which, for example, the tax system works by awarding payoffs to each according to his means, the belief system will also tend to be most comforting to those who are already

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most comfortable. Nowhere is this more clear than in the average American's faith that our socioeconomic system is largely meritocratic. The rich, on the whole, can congratulate themselves on having earned their riches and the poor are made to feel that they are deservingly poor. To be sure, only case-hardened reactionaries imagine that the cream is perfectly free to rise, but in general we tend to believe that, insofar as the system is working well, *carrières* are *ouvertes aux talents.*

Inequality, by Christopher Jencks and seven coauthors, all of whom are associated with Harvard University's Center for Educational Policy Research, examines the American system of distributive justice in considerable detail and concludes that the allocation of rewards in our society is appallingly random relative to the things Americans believe our system is geared to reward. To a startlingly large extent, Jencks shows, inequality in America cannot be explained by differences in inherited intelligence, cognitive skills, quality of schooling, extent of schooling, or any other factor that could give our system a reasonable right to call itself a meritocracy.

Consider inherited intelligence, for example. Although the most genetically advantaged fifth of the population, taken as a group, earns 35 to 40 percent more than the most genetically disadvantaged fifth, the amount of income inequality among individuals with the same genetic endowment is only marginally less than the inequality found in the population as a whole. "Our best estimate," Jencks writes, "is that we would find only about 3 percent less income inequality in genetically homogeneous subpopulations than in the entire American population." This means that even if one could equalize the intelligence of all members of our society, one would thereby reduce inequality by no more than 3 percent.

It is important to be scrupulously careful about what this sort of analysis means, for in the year since the publication of *Inequality,* Jencks's work has been the target of a torrent of abuse, most of it from people who have not understood what he was saying. Jencks examines inequality by focusing on inequalities between individuals rather than inequalities between groups. This approach, he says, "accounts for much of the discrepancy between our conclusions and those of others who have examined the same data." It is, of course, these conclusions that have occasioned the controversy surrounding the publication of *Inequality.* For the most part, those offended fall into two classes: educators, including educational "reformers," and blacks, along with their white allies in the fight for black civil rights. This is unfortunate, especially in the latter case, because in fact Jencks is on their side far more deeply than they seem yet to have realized.

Educators have taken issue with Jencks for what they take to be his proclamation of the inutility of education and educational reform. Jencks's discovery that differences in schooling fail to account for individual inequality in

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America seems to imply that efforts to equalize the allocation of educational resources are pointless, as are efforts to improve the educational process as a whole. In a sense the educators are right in responding to Jencks in this way, for he does indeed deliver a jarring left hook to the jaw of the educational establishment. But in another sense they are wrong, for Jencks has not taken away from them anything they cannot well afford to lose. Educators, he suggests, would do well to set themselves the task of educating their clients and to forget about social engineering, not because social engineering is unnecessary but because the educational process simply is not capable of doing it. Jencks's argument on this score seems to me largely consistent with the educational radicalism of Ivan Illich and the late Paul Goodman.

Curiously, black educators have been even fiercer than their white colleagues in denouncing Jencks's work. Ronald Edmonds, in his contribution to the *Harvard Education Review*'s collection of mostly hostile responses to *Inequality*, lumps Jencks's study with the work of Shockley and Jensen, denouncing it because it "seem[s] to point to the conclusion that blacks and lower class people are about where they ought to be in the society—at the bottom—and that all efforts to move them, or let them move themselves, are futile." Jencks, of course, points to no such conclusion. Far from arguing that the American system has treated its racial minorities according to their deserts, Jencks contends that at least half the income gap between blacks and whites is directly attributable to racial discrimination in hiring, promotion, and salary scales. In other words, blacks earn less primarily because they are paid less and only secondarily because they are less qualified for competition as a result of inferior education.

I must candidly confess that I fail to see why a black educator finds such arguments offensive. "We cannot allow Jencks or anyone else," Edmonds writes, "to let public officials and school systems off the hook." But in fact the hook on which Edmonds wants to impale the schools also cuts deeply into the flesh of black self-confidence. Is it not clear that in blaming the schools for black inequality, Edmonds is saying that the schools have succeeded in making blacks stupid—at least relative to whatever kinds of intelligence our economic system rewards? Conversely, is not Jencks, by demonstrating that the admittedly inferior education offered blacks does not account for a large portion of their economically inferior position, saying in effect that blacks are not nearly so competitively disadvantaged as their economic position would seem to suggest?

Jencks responds to racial discrimination by insisting that it is more fruitful to attack it directly than to attack what one imagines to be its causes. Indeed, Jencks's evidence as a whole leads him to the conclusion that the only way inequality between individuals can be significantly reduced in our society is by policies aimed directly at this result—that is, by establishing floors and

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ceilings on income. Because differences in education, socioeconomic background, and native intelligence account for only a small percentage of income inequality in America, the elimination of these differences would not reduce the overall level of inequality to a significant extent. Rather, it would result in a system in which extremes of wealth and poverty continued to exist but were merely uncorrelated with skin color and class origin.

"We do not want to randomize inequality," Jencks writes in an unambiguous formulation of his objectives; "we want to reduce it." In the final analysis, his position is ethical rather than strictly sociological. It is based on his recognition of the fundamental distinction—a distinction all too often forgotten or ignored—between fairness and justice. A well-balanced roulette wheel awards payoffs fairly among the players, but in no sense of the word can its allocations be called just. Leaving aside the question of whether even a truly meritocratic system would be just—the justice of meritocracy, Jencks points out, can be defended only if one is prepared to argue "that inequality based on genetic advantages is morally acceptable, but that inequality based on other accidents of birth is not"—one is still left with Jencks's ample documentation of the fact that the American socioeconomic system is far from being meritocratic. As presently constituted, therefore, the American system is neither fair nor just: its reward machinery is heavily biased and insofar as it is not biased, it is capricious.

It goes without saying that, even in the absence of justice, fairness is preferable to unfairness; a society which distributes inequality without reference to race—or sex or socioeconomic status, for that matter—is preferable to one which is biased in terms of these variables. Jencks acknowledges as much, although his critics often seem to imagine that he does not. He has no quarrel with those who consider the elimination of these biases to be something worth struggling for. But this is not, he insists, something worth settling for.

Philip Rosenberg

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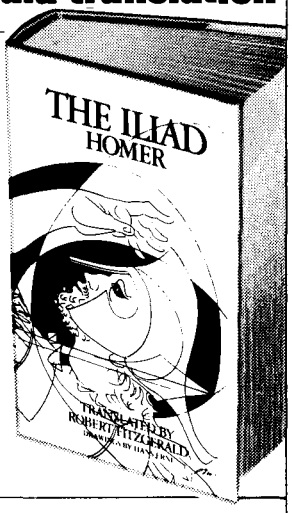

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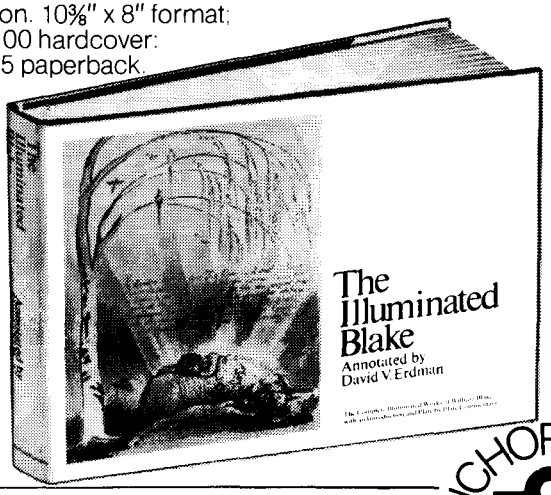

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